

CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION focus

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logical . simple . targeted
analysis & explanation
of relevant news

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Coverage from
varied
sources

ESSAYS OF THE MONTH

Selected essays
from Rau's
GSI students

OCTOBER
2024



RAU'S IAS
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Since 1953

*editorial
note*



Stubble Management and not Stubble Burning

With the onset of the stubble-burning season, the focus has once again shifted to the annual worsening of air quality in north India and the National Capital Region, in particular. Due to various reasons, farmers are compelled to burn remaining rice stubble in their farms, particularly in the Green Revolution belt of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh.

Stubble burning leads to multiple adverse consequences such as deterioration of soil quality and field biodiversity (death of earthworms which play an important role in improving soil quality); loss of precious biofuel raw material; pollution and adverse air quality which harms health of children and elderly, in particular.

Stubble burning has been a focus area of courts, the National Green Tribunal, and the Central and State Governments. Judiciary has continuously pushed the states and Centre to act upon, convince and motivate farmers to stop this age-old practice. While the Centre has framed schemes such as the 'Promotion for Agricultural Mechanisation for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue' with a budget of 700 crores. The scheme aims to provide farmers with subsidised access to crop residue management machinery and set up custom hiring centres to enable farmers to rent out such machinery. States on their part have tried to educate farmers about crop diversification and have even experimented with fines for farmers who continue to burn stubble on their farms. Schemes have been floated for farmers to sell their crop residue for electricity generation.

However, despite these initiatives, the problem of stubble burning could not be improved upon. Reports have highlighted that farmers will again this year burn stubble in their fields. In this context, let us analyse the reasons for the same:

REASONS FOR STUBBLE BURNING

1. **Dominance of Rice-Wheat cropping system** which is incentivised by the Minimum Support Price and Open-Ended Procurement. After harvesting rice crop, there is a small window for farmers to prepare their fields for the wheat crop, compelling them to burn stubble in the field.
2. **Rice straw, unlike wheat straw, is not consumed by livestock**, leaving very little economic value for farmers. This problem is aggravated by the absence of farm-level collection mechanisms for paddy straw.
3. **Use of Combine-Harvester for harvesting paddy crop** has become the dominant method for harvesting rice crop due to labour shortages and rising costs. Harvesting by Combine-Harvester leaves much of the plant as stalks in the fields. This makes it impossible for mechanical seeding machines to navigate farms to sow the wheat seeds, hence compelling farmers to burn stubble.
4. **Punjab groundwater regulations** to save the use of groundwater in paddy cultivation and align paddy farming with monsoon pushed the farming cycle from earlier April to October to June to November. This left very small window for harvesting rice crop, pushing farmers to burn stubble in the fields.

5. **Popularity of Late growing rice varieties:** The problem of stubble burning is more pronounced in districts where farmers grow PUSA-44, which takes 160 days to harvest (late-growing variety) and has higher biomass content. This reduces the clearing window for farmers compelling them to burn stubble.
6. **Cultural Reasons:** Farmers believe that they have been burning stubble for ages. There is a belief among them that burning paddy straw in the field improves the productivity of the soil.
7. **Policy failures:** Policies framed to address the issue of stubble burning have not been adequately successful. Despite incentives for farmers to procure for in-situ management of stubble like a paddy-straw chopper, shred the stalks and happy seeders, very few farmers have access to these machines. Even farmers who have access to these machines do not use them optimally. There has been a lack of emphasis on educating farmers about the harm they cause to soil by burning stubble. Also, despite the adequate provision of the budget, states have failed to spend their share of expenditure on necessary farm management machines. Very few farmers have access to happy seeders which allows them to sow wheat while paddy straw remains in the field. Centre and States have incentivised power generation from biological waste, but the creation of infrastructure and scale for the collection of crop residue from the farms have not been adequately developed.

In this respect, there is a need for greater ownership, capacity and emphasis on part of all stakeholders for addressing the issue of stubble burning in a sustainable, inclusive and farm-friendly way.

SOME STRATEGIES

1. **Culture shift and educating farmers:** Farmers are the most important stakeholders in the entire issue. The livelihood necessity to sow the wheat crop forces them to light the stubble. States should focus on talking to and educating farmers about the ill effects of stubble burning on agriculture sustainability. They need to be educated about modern means such as happy seeders and crop diversification and various incentives and facilitated to adopt them.

2. **Crop diversification:** Incentives should be given to farmers for shifting away from the water-guzzling rice crop, particularly in the water-stressed regions of Punjab and Haryana to other more remunerative crops such as horticulture, animal husbandry and food processing etc. Moving to these crops will not only improve incomes but also improve the sustainability of farming. The larger ecosystem of procurement, field demonstrations and access to good quality seeds is essential for this.
3. **Moving away from late-growing paddy varieties** such as PUSA-44 to those with a shorter 120–130-day lifecycle. This would allow harvesting to be done earlier, leaving farmers with more time to clear their fields before the need to sow wheat.
4. **Focus on in-situ management of stubble:** In-situ management i.e., mixing of shredded stubble with soil improves soil productivity and saves water. For this to happen, states need to build capacity so that incentives for stubble management reach farmers. Technologies such as PUSA Bio-decomposer and Happy Seeders need to be subsidised, promoted and made available to farmers. Also, training needs to be given to farmers to use them effectively.
5. **Emphasis on Off-farm measures i.e.,** stubble being removed from farms and sold for other uses: Biomass palletization should be promoted for use in biomass-based power plants. Incentives and investments are needed to promote stubble collection from farms.
6. **Reforms in Agriculture Bureaucracy and local bodies:** To enact such large-scale change and education program, States and Centre needs to focus on increasing the capacity of agriculture bureaucracy at the cutting edge to interact with farmers regularly. Panchayats should also be involved in this mission.

The issue of stubble burning is a sensitive one. On one side is the livelihood of small and marginal farmers who burn stubble to clear their fields for the next crop and on the other side is the health and well-being of millions of citizens. The long-term solution to stubble burning calls for motivating and making it easier for farmers to move away from this practice. Focussed attention, sensitive approach and cooperation of all stakeholders will be required in this mission

JAIKRIT VATSAL
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focus

CRITICAL NOTES FOR THE PREPARATION OF GENERAL STUDIES PAPERS

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The sources relied for selection and analysis of issues are:

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| 1. The Hindu, The Hindu (Sun.) | 2. The Indian Express |
| 3. The Times of India | 4. Asian Age |
| 5. The Tribune | 6. The Economic Times |
| 7. Hindu Business Line | 8. Frontline |
| 9. Economic and Political Weekly | 10. IDSA |
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The publication, as the name suggests, focuses solely on issues which are relevant to the **factual** as well as **applied** aspects of the General Studies' syllabus. That is how Focus covers all anticipated issues and themes for the upcoming Civil Services Examination (CSE).

Features

PART ONE | CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

- This month edition covers analysis of news from the immediately preceding month.
- All news/issues are categorized and clubbed syllabus-wise (International Relations, Polity & Governance, Science & Technology, Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude and so on) for efficient study.
- Background information has been added to provide context.
- Related and Additional information-dimensions have been explained to add depth to your understanding.
- Maps and figures have been provided for associative and retentive learning.
- Practice Questions

PART TWO | ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

- Coverage from varied sources

PART THREE | ESSAYS FOR YOU

- Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

For further understanding or discussion in any topic, please consult your respective professors.

Good Luck!

RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE

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PART ONE

CURRENT AFFAIRS

**logical .simple .targeted
analysis & explanation
of all relevant news of the month**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

VERTICAL FISCAL IMBALANCE

#GOVERNMENTBUDGETING #INCLUSIVEGROWTH

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The role of the 16th Finance Commission should be to eliminate vertical fiscal imbalance in federal relations.

WHAT IS VERTICAL FISCAL IMBALANCE?

- Vertical fiscal imbalance (VFI) is a structural issue that occurs when the revenue and expenditure responsibilities of different levels of government are not equal.
- In India, states are responsible for a large portion of public expenditure, but their ability to raise revenue is limited compared to the Union government.
- However, as per the 15th Finance Commission, states contributed 61% of revenue expenditure but only collected 38% of revenue receipts.
- Hence, India has had a larger, and rising, vertical imbalance than most other federations.

HOW DOES VERTICAL FISCAL IMBALANCE ARISE?

Constitutionally, the financial duties of the Union government and the States are divided.

- **Major Revenues Collected by the Union:** On the revenue front, to maximise the efficiency of tax collection, the Personal Income Tax, the Corporation Tax and a part of indirect taxes are best collected by the Union government.
- **Key Expenditures Made by States:** On the expenditure front, to maximise the efficiency of spending, publicly provided goods and services are best supplied by the tier of the government closest to its users.

WHAT ARE FACTORS THAT HAVE EXACERBATED THIS IMBALANCE?

- **Stagnant Tax Devolution:** The Finance Commissions recommend the States' share in the net tax revenue of

the Union government. However, despite increasing expenditure obligations of the state governments, the states share in Net Tax revenue remains stagnant as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Finance Commissions recommended 42% and 41%, respectively.

- **Increased Cess and Surcharge Collections:** The transfers made to states are a prescribed share of the "Net Proceeds" or the Net Tax Revenue (Gross Tax Revenue of the Union less surcharges, cesses and costs of collection).
 - The Union government is increasing tax collection under cess and surcharge categories mainly to implement its own schemes in specific sectors, and at the same time, the revenues so raised need not be shared with the States.
 - The cess and surcharge collection in 2015-16 was 5.9% (Rs.85,638 crore) of the gross tax revenue of the Union government, and this ratio increased to 10.8% (Rs 3.63 lakh crore) in 2023-24.
 - As a result, despite an increase in gross tax revenues of the Union, there is no corresponding increase in Net Tax revenues to states.
- **Reduction in Grant-in-aids:** Grants-in-aid to States is another statutory grant recommended by the Finance Commission. The grants-in-aid to States declined in absolute amount from Rs 1.95 lakh crore in 2015-16 to Rs. 1.65 lakh crore in 2023-24.
 - Thus, the combined share of the statutory financial transfers in the gross tax revenue of the Union government declined from 48.2% to 35.32%.
- **Compromised Political Autonomy on Non-Statutory Transfers:** The Union government has two other routes of direct financial transfers to States, i.e., Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Central Sector Schemes (CSec Schemes). The Union government influences the priorities of the States through CSS wherein the Union government provides partial funding and another part is to be committed by States.

- However these transfers offer limited flexibility to the state governments in implementation of these schemes, despite the features of flexi funds introduced in recent history.
- Additionally, inadequate deliberations with states before introduction of new schemes and often the states' financial health is not given due consideration further erodes their political autonomy and fiscal health.
- **Reduction in Share of Untied Funds in Central Transfers to States:** As per the 15th Finance Commission, untied funds (tax devolution + revenue deficit grants) in central transfers are estimated to be 29.5% of the Centre's gross revenue receipts during 2021-26 - notably less than during 2015-20 (32.4%)

WAY FORWARD

- **Increasing the Share in Tax Devolution:** Many States have raised the demand that the share of tax devolution from the net proceeds must be fixed at 50% by the 16th Finance Commission to offset the exclusion from the net proceeds of the substantial amounts of cesses and surcharges, which truncates the net proceeds within the gross tax revenue.
- **Augmenting Non-tax Revenue:** Dedicated application of user charges on economic services such as power & irrigation with better cost recovery mechanisms.
- **Making central transfers more effective** can help states to reduce their dependence on market borrowings and address fiscal shocks on account of schemes like UDAY etc. Well-defined calendars for transfer, compositional shift from tied to un-tied transfers and reducing levy of cesses & surcharges are ideal steps that can be taken.
- **Overhaul of FRBM framework:** The 15th FC report recognizes that the FRBM Act needs major restructuring, especially post the pandemic, and recommends that a new framework is needed to achieve debt sustainability.
- **Flexible borrowing limits for fiscally prudent states,** which have not breached FRBM limits and managed overall debt at sustainable levels.

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

#INCLUSIVEGROWTH #FINANCIALINCLUSION

**PRIMARY
SOURCE** THE HINDU

Due to the phenomenon of jobless growth, i.e., the rise in output and labour productivity without the commensurate growth in employment generation, several countries have mooted the idea of a universal basic income (UBI).

WHAT IS A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI)?

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a **social welfare tool** in which all citizens or residents of a country receive a regular, unconditional sum of money from the government, regardless of their income, employment status, or wealth. The key features of UBI are:

- **Universal:** It is provided to everyone, regardless of income, wealth, or social status.
- **Unconditional:** There are no requirements for recipients to meet conditions such as seeking employment or demonstrating need.
- **Regular and Recurring:** The payment is made at regular intervals (e.g., monthly or annually).
- **Cash Payment:** It is given in cash, allowing individuals the freedom to spend it as they choose, as opposed to receiving in-kind benefits.

Hence, the goal of UBI is to provide financial security, reduce poverty, and offer a safety net to all individuals, enabling them to meet basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare.

WHAT ARE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI) IN INDIA?

- **Reduction in Income Inequality:** India's growth hasn't translated into equitable wealth distribution. The World Inequality Report 2022 highlights that the top 1% of the population holds over 22% of the national income, while the bottom 50% holds only 13%. By providing a fixed income to all, UBI has the potential to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. This can contribute to more balanced economic growth and social stability.
- **Economic Growth through Consumption:** With more disposable income, lower-income households are likely to spend money on essential goods and services, which could stimulate demand and boost the economy,

particularly in rural areas. A UBI set at ₹7,620 per year could cost 4.9% of GDP, achievable through subsidy rationalisation (Economic Survey 2016-17).

- **Promote Formalisation:** UBI could encourage participation in the formal sector, broadening the tax base and improving compliance. Increasing GST collections, which hit ₹1.65 lakh crore in July 2024, indicates potential for revenue growth through tax formalisation.
- **Informal economy:** Nearly 90% of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector, where workers face irregular income and lack of job security. The Covid pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of informal workers as millions lost their livelihoods. A UBI could offer a financial cushion, protecting these workers and enabling their participation in the formal economy.
- **Administrative & Financial Efficiency:** India's complex welfare schemes come with high administrative costs. Consolidating these into a UBI framework could reduce costs and improve efficiency. The success of DBT, enabled by Aadhaar-linked accounts, demonstrates the viability of using digital infrastructure to streamline welfare distribution.
- **Empowering marginalised communities:** Global Findex 2021 data shows that only 77% of women have formal banking access, compared to 97% of men. UBI could empower marginalised groups, especially women and lower-income communities and improve financial inclusion, giving women more autonomy in household decisions and access to education and healthcare.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME IN INDIA

- **Fiscal Burden:** Financing UBI would be a significant challenge for a country like India. With over 1.4 billion people, providing even a modest income could put immense pressure on public finances and lead to higher taxes or increased national debt.
- **Inflation Risks:** An increase in disposable income might lead to higher demand for goods and services, which could cause inflation. This could erode the

purchasing power of UBI, diminishing its benefits for low-income families.

- **Disincentive to Work:** There is a concern that UBI might reduce people's motivation to work, especially for low-wage jobs. Although this has been debated, some argue that guaranteed income could lead to complacency or dependency on government support.
- **Targeting vs. Universality:** India has a diverse population with varying needs. Critics argue that UBI, being universal, could be inefficient because it would distribute resources equally to the rich and poor alike, potentially diverting funds from those who need it most.
- **Replacement of Existing Welfare Schemes:** UBI might replace or reduce other existing social welfare programs. If poorly implemented, this could harm beneficiaries of targeted schemes like food subsidies or employment guarantees (e.g., the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, MGNREGA).

CONCLUSION

- UBI can serve as a vital tool in the country's development strategy, ensuring no citizen is left behind as India marches through its Amrit Kaal and the vision of a Viksit Bharat.
- While UBI has the potential to transform the Indian socio-economic landscape, its success would depend on careful implementation and balancing the fiscal realities with the intended social benefits.
- **A phased or targeted approach might be more feasible** in the Indian context rather than a fully universal rollout.

CROP DIVERSIFICATION

#AGRICULTURE #FOODSECURITY

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

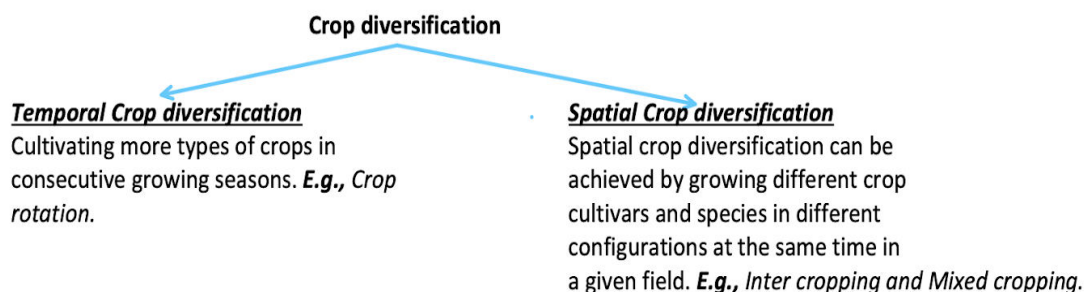
The Centre and Punjab government has started a new scheme to diversify agriculture and help farmers shift away from paddy. It gives them an incentive of Rs 17,500 per hectare to shift to less water-guzzling crops in the kharif season.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS CROP DIVERSIFICATION?

Crop diversification is an effort to increase the crop diversity by making changes to the temporal and spatial

cropping patterns to enhance productivity, increase farmers income and maintain ecological balance.



WHAT ARE BENEFITS OF CROP DIVERSIFICATION?

- **Increased Income to the Farmers:** At present, 70–80% farmers have land below 2 hectares. To overcome this, existing cropping patterns must be diversified with high value crops such as maize, pulses, fruits and vegetables etc.
- **Reduces Risk:**
 - Under sudden adverse weather conditions like erratic rainfall, drought, hail, incidence of insect and pest disease crop diversification through mixed cropping may be useful.
 - Diversification enables the farmers to spread his risk. If one concentrates on one crop/product, a harvest failure or a price collapse may ruin him. It is very unlikely that all crops/products fail simultaneously in the same year.
- **Employment Generation:** Adopting the conventional cropping system like rice-wheat generally leads to lack of employment during off seasons and results in urban migration. Crop diversification helps rural households to have more opportunities of full-time employment.
- **Conservation of Resources:**
 - Adoption of crop diversification helps in conservation of natural resources like introduction of legume(pulses) in rice-wheat cropping system has the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen to sustain soil fertility.
 - Different crops require different types of soil fertility. A combination or rotation of crops is expected to utilise all the properties of the soil than does concentration, year after year, on one crop. For instance, cereals use a great deal of nitrates, cabbages more of sulphates, clovers take a lot of lime and root crops make heavy demand on

phosphates. If different crops are grown in successive years, it will be possible to restore the elements which one crop uses up before the same crop is planted again sometime later.

- **Reduction of Outgrowth:** Rotation of crops facilitates reduction of weeds as it permits cleaning operations at different times. It thus minimises any type of weeds from nourishing and spreading year after year.
- **Nutritional Security:** Presently, the production basket of agriculture is dominated by Rice and Wheat. However, there has been a shift in consumption pattern towards more protein-based foods such as Pulses, Milk, Egg, Fish, Meat etc. leading to demand-supply mismatch and thus nutritional insecurity. The diversification towards cultivation of other crops and livestock rearing would address the micronutrient deficiencies, Vitamin, iron deficiencies etc.

REASONS FOR LACK OF CROP DIVERSIFICATION

- **MSP and assured procurement** for cereal crops like Rice and Wheat (Policy led shift in cropping pattern).
- **Inadequate irrigation facilities:** Most of the cropped area in the country is completely dependent on rainfall. Therefore, some crops may not be able to survive. Irrigation can improve diversity in the farm by allowing crops with different maturation periods to be cultivated through extension of the growing seasons. In India, reports found a strong positive relation between the extent of irrigation and crop diversification. Crops with different maturity periods can't be cultivated with inadequate irrigation facilities and in rainfed regions.
- **Poor post-harvest infrastructure:** Diversification towards high value crops like fruits and vegetables need robust post-harvest infrastructure like cold chain facilities and good market connectivity. Indian farmers

are constrained in taking high value crops due to lack of cold storage and ready marketing facilities.

- **Inefficient agrimarkets:** Owing to the fragmented Agri-markets in India, most of the farmers stick to the crop varieties which have demand in the local markets.
- **Contract farming restrictions:** Rigid contractual laws in many states disable the farmers in avoiding market risks in shifting to high value crops, through contract farming.
- **Fragmentation of land:** Land fragmentation could drive farmers towards intensive agricultural practices such as continuous farming and monocropping. Small land holding sizes are not conducive to intercropping and mixed cropping.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

- Rationalise MSP policies.
- Fiscal incentives for alternate crops.
- Encourage contract farming.
- **Innovative agricultural practices:** For example, TN farmers practise Ultra High-Density Plantation (UHDP) for mangoes. This method allows 674 mango trees per acre compared to the traditional method of 40 only. This translates to a significant increase in yield and profits. This technique leads to significant water savings (up to 50%) and fertiliser savings (up to 30 per cent), further enhancing profitability.

PRECISION FARMING

#AGRICULTUREINPUTS



Centre to invest Rs 6,000 crore in smart farming with AI, drones, and data to boost crop yields.

WHAT IS PRECISION FARMING?

- Precision farming, also known as precision agriculture, is a modern farming management strategy that uses technology to observe, measure, and respond to variability in crops and fields.
- This approach aims to optimise agricultural production by tailoring farming practices to specific conditions within a field, thereby improving efficiency and sustainability.
- Key technologies in precision farming:

- **GPS and GNSS:** These systems provide accurate positioning, allowing for precise mapping and management of fields.
- **IoT Devices:** Sensors and connected devices gather real-time data on soil conditions, weather patterns, crop health, and equipment performance.
- **Drones:** Used for aerial surveys, capturing high-resolution imagery and data for detailed field analysis.
- **Variable Rate Technology (VRT):** Equipment like seeders and sprayers that adjust the amount of inputs (e.g., water, fertilisers) based on data collected.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH CONVENTIONAL FARMING

- **Resource Inefficiency:** Conventional methods often lead to overuse or underuse of resources like water and fertilisers.
- **Environmental Impact:** Traditional farming practices can have significant negative effects on the environment, including soil degradation and water contamination.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Farmers relying on conventional methods are more susceptible to the impacts of climate change and weather unpredictability.
- **Limited Technological Integration:** Conventional farming often lacks the integration of advanced technologies such as AI, drones, and IoT, which can enhance farming efficiency and sustainability.

BENEFITS OF PRECISION FARMING

- **Increased Efficiency:** Utilises resources like water, fertilisers, and pesticides more effectively.
- **Enhanced Production:** Improves both the quality and quantity of crop yields.
- **Sustainability:** Helps in insulating farmers from climate change and other uncertainties.
- **Support for Farmers:** Provides financial aid through the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), including interest subvention of 3% on loans for technology adoption.
- **Sharing of Best Practices:** Plans to collaborate with countries like the Netherlands and Israel to incorporate advanced farming solutions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Development Centers:** Establishment of 22 Precision Farming Development Centres (PFDCs) to test and adapt technologies for local conditions.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO BOOST PRECISION FARMING

- **Investment:** The Centre plans to invest Rs 6,000 crore in the Smart Precision Horticulture Programme under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) scheme.
- **Enhanced Coverage:** The initiative will cover 15,000 acres over five years (2024-25 to 2028-29) and benefit around 60,000 farmers.
- **Development of Infrastructure:** The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) supports projects related to smart and precision agriculture, offering loans for technological solutions in farm practices.
- **CoEs Expansion:** The number of Centres of Excellence (CoEs) is expected to reach 100 in the next five years, complementing existing CoEs under the Indo-Israel Agriculture Project.
- **Geographical Spread:** PFDCs are established across various states and central agricultural institutions in India, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and others.

FALL IN FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS

#EXTERNALSECTOR

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

India's share in global FDI flows has seen a steep decline in recent times, dropping from 6.6% in 2020 to just 2.2% in 2023. This has raised alarm about the nation's ability to sustain its attractiveness to global investors.

WHAT IS FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)?

FDI is the investment through 'capital instruments' by a person resident outside India:

- In an unlisted Indian company; or
- In 10% or more of the equity capital of a listed Indian company

FACTS RELATED TO FDI

- **Total FDI inflows in the country** in the last 23 years (April 2000 - September 2023) are \$953.143 Bn while the total FDI inflows received in the last 9 years (April

2014 - September 2023) was \$615.73 Bn which amounts to nearly 65% of total FDI inflow in last 23 years.

- The highest ever annual FDI inflow of \$83.57 Bn reported during the FY 2021-22.

- Total FDI inflows in the country in FY 22-23 is \$70.97 Bn.

- **Origin Country: Mauritius (24%)**, Singapore (23%), USA (9%), Netherlands (7%) and Japan (6%) emerge as top 5 countries for FDI equity inflows into India FY 2022-23.

- **Sectors** receiving highest FDI Equity Inflow during FY 2022-23 are: **Services Sector** (Finance, Banking, Insurance, Non Fin/ Business, Outsourcing, R&D, Courier, Tech. Testing and Analysis, Other) (16%), Computer Software & Hardware (15%), Trading (6%), Telecommunications (6%) and Automobile Industry (5%).

- **State-wise:** Top 5 States receiving highest FDI Equity Inflow during FY 2022-23 are **Maharashtra (29%)**, Karnataka (24%), Gujarat (17%), Delhi (13%), and Tamil Nadu (5%).

ROUTES FOR FDI

- **Automatic Route:** Under it, the non-resident investor or the Indian company **does not require any approval** from the Government of India for the investment.
- **Government Route:** Under it, prior to investment, **approval** from the Government of India **is required**. **Proposals** for foreign direct investment under Government route are **considered by the respective Administrative Ministry/ Department**.

SECTORS PROHIBITED FROM RECEIVING FDI

- **Lottery Business** including Government/private lottery, online lotteries, etc.
- **Gambling and Betting** including casinos etc.
- Chit funds
- Nidhi company
- Trading in Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)
- **Real Estate Business or Construction of Farm Houses:** 'Real estate business' shall **not include development of townships, construction of residential /commercial premises, roads or bridges and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)**

registered and regulated under the SEBI (REITs) Regulations 2014.

- Manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes, of tobacco or of tobacco substitutes.
- Activities/sectors not open to private sector investment e.g. Atomic Energy and Railway operations.

Foreign technology collaboration in any form including licensing for franchise, trademark, brand name, management contract is also prohibited for Lottery Business, Gambling and Betting activities.

CHALLENGES FACED BY FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN INDIA

- **Restrictive Regulations:** Despite improvements in some areas, India's policy environment continues to lag behind its peers in creating a truly investor-friendly climate. For instance, the OECD's FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index shows that India's FDI restrictions remain higher (0.207) than rivals like Vietnam (0.130), South Africa (0.055), Brazil (0.081), and Korea (0.135) (see figure).
- **Policy Instability:** India's decision to terminate or renegotiate the majority of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), which imposed lengthy domestic dispute resolution requirements before allowing international arbitration, may have inadvertently signalled policy unpredictability, severely denting investor confidence.
- **Inadequate Investor Protection:** Global investors are wary of committing long-term capital, fearing inadequate protection for their investments. This hesitancy has hindered the signing of new treaties and has become a significant impediment in broader trade negotiations, including free trade agreements.
- **Stagnation in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-related investments,** as highlighted by the World Investment Report 2024, adds another layer of complexity to India's FDI landscape.

WAY FORWARD

- **Seeking Sustainable Investments:** As global capital increasingly seeks out sustainable and impact-driven opportunities, India must position itself as a leader in this space. This calls for a concerted effort to align national development goals with global sustainability

standards, making the country an attractive destination for long-term responsible investment.

- **Liberalising Key Sectors:** To attract more FDI, India must further liberalise key sectors such as insurance, e-commerce, and multi-brand retail. Besides, India needs to focus on sectors where it possesses comparative advantage, such as renewable energy and digital technologies. By aligning FDI policies with these strengths, India can create a more targeted and effective approach to attracting foreign capital.
- **Strengthening Institutional Capacity:** The sectoral focus should be complemented by efforts to strengthen institutional capacity to better facilitate and retain foreign investments, ensuring that initial investments translate into long-term commitments.
- **Enhancing Digital Governance:** A key priority must be the enhancement of digital government services to streamline business processes and improve transparency. The use of digital facilitation tools, as noted in UNCTAD data, has shown good results in developing countries.

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

#EXTERNALSECTOR

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

India's submissions at the WTO demanding that disciplines on fisheries subsidies should effectively check large-scale industrial fishing fleets involved in deep-sea fishing while not inhibiting small players looking to expand their fishing capabilities have received support from many developing countries and LDCs.

MORE ABOUT THE NEWS

- The **WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, adopted at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) on 17 June 2022, **aims at prohibiting harmful fisheries subsidies**, which are a key factor in the widespread depletion of the world's fish stocks.
- Such subsidies include support for vessel construction, acquisition and modernisation, purchasing machines and fishing equipment and purchasing fuel, etc.

- They also include insurance, income support, price support for fish caught, support to cover operating losses and support targeting fishing beyond the subsidising member's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

WHAT IS INDIA'S STAND?

- India's submissions on the WTO draft text on fisheries subsidies point to significant loopholes that **may perpetuate unsustainable fishing operations**, particularly by large-scale industrial fishing nations.
- The proposed text **did not effectively discipline the large-scale, industrial fishing operations that are primarily responsible for overfishing and depletion of marine resources**. Developed countries have existing large industrial fishing fleets that have been built on government subsidies in the past.
- Instead, the agreement **imposed stringent conditions on small-scale fishers, particularly in developing countries**. If the Agreement is implemented as it is, the net result will be that developing countries like India, which do not have a large industrial fishing fleet, will never be able to create a large industrial fishing fleet in the absence of any government support.

WHAT IS A WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO)?

- It is an **international organisation** established in 1995 through the **Marrakesh Treaty to promote free and fair international trade**.
- It is successor to the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, a multilateral agreement which came into being in 1947 to promote trade in Goods.
- Under GATT, 8 rounds of negotiations took place. The 8th Round of Negotiations are referred to as the Uruguay Round (1986-94), which ultimately led to the establishment of WTO in 1995.
- The WTO is **based at Geneva, Switzerland**. Presently, it **has 164 member countries**.

STRUCTURE OF WTO

- **Ministerial Conference:**
 - The Topmost decision-making body of WTO is the Ministerial Conference.
 - Usually meets every two years.
 - Brings together all members of the WTO, all of which are countries or customs unions.

- The Ministerial Conference can take decisions on all matters under any of multilateral trade agreements.

- The **General Council** oversees the operation of the agreements and ministerial decisions on a regular basis. It also acts as a Dispute Settlement Body and a Trade Policy Review Body, each with its own chairman.
- **Director General (DG)**, appointed for a period of four years by the Ministerial Conference, heads the Secretariat of the WTO.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE SUBSCRIBED BY THE WTO?

- **Most Favoured Nation:** Each of the WTO member countries should "treat all the other members equally as 'most-favoured' trading partners.". "Grant someone a special favour (such as a lower customs duty rate) and you have to do the same for all other WTO members". However, some exceptions such as FTAs are allowed.
- **National Treatment:** Imported and locally produced goods should be treated equally. The same should apply to foreign and domestic services, and to foreign and local trademarks, copyrights, and patents. National treatment only applies once a product, service or item of intellectual property has entered the market. Therefore, charging customs duty on an import is not a violation of national treatment even if locally produced products are not charged an equivalent tax.
- **Special and Differential Treatment:** Give developing countries special rights such as longer time periods for implementing agreements and commitments, support to help developing countries to build the infrastructure to undertake WTO work etc.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT THE WTO IS PLAGUED WITH?

- **Concerns of Developing Nations:** Developing countries contend that negotiations are often dominated by developed nations, giving them an edge in shaping rules that favour their interests. These countries encounter difficulties in fully engaging in negotiations and struggle with the complexities of adhering to and implementing trade regulations and standards.
- **Self-Classification of Members:** There are instances when relatively well-off members self-identify themselves as developing countries to take advantage of special treatment provisions. This has raised concerns about fairness and equity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Stalemate in Negotiations:** The WTO follows the process of consensus-based decision-making. However, it has frequently led to deadlocks in negotiations, thereby hindering the ability to reach meaningful agreements on crucial matters like agricultural subsidies, intellectual property rights, and market access.
- **Dysfunctional Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism faces a crisis due to the United States' blocking of appointments to the Appellate Body. This situation presents challenges for members in enforcing WTO obligations without a functional appeals process.
- **Limited Capacity to Detect & Address Violations:** There are concerns about the WTO's limited capacity to detect and address violations of its multilateral agreements in a prompt and efficient manner.
- **Rise in Protectionism and Bilateralism:** Recently there has been a surge in protectionist policies and a shift toward bilateral or regional trade pacts, circumventing the broader multilateral framework of the WTO.
- **Emerging Challenges:** Various new concerns have arisen since 1995, including the intersection of trade with issues like climate change, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gender equality, and human rights. However, the WTO has lagged behind in incorporating these demands into its original framework.

HOW TO REFORM THE WTO?

- **Breaking the Deadlock in Dispute Settlement System:** Functioning of the Dispute Settlement System is crucial in ensuring the rules-based trading order. Efforts should be made to appoint the members of the Appellate Body at the earliest.
- **Enhancing Transparency to Boost Legitimacy:** Enhanced transparency on both national and international levels is necessary to improve the quality and legitimacy of WTO regulations. This involves avoiding closed-door meetings or exclusive discussions (like mini-ministerials or green rooms) that exclude certain members from important decision-making processes.
- **Institutional Reforms:**
 - Establishing an Executive Committee: To enhance the WTO's decision-making processes, there's an

inherent need to establish an executive committee to address the lack of leadership within the WTO and offer guidance for future negotiations.

- **Strengthening the Secretariat's Role:** The WTO should bolster the Secretariat's role as a pivotal agenda setter within the organisation and improve its ability to conduct research and gather data.
- **Giving a Voice to Smaller Nations:** As per the foundational principle of consensus, all members' viewpoints, including those of smaller nations, must be respected. This includes refraining from using political or economic pressure to coerce a country into agreeing to decisions that contradict its fundamental interests.
- **Enhanced Technical Assistance for Developing Nations:** This includes providing improved technical assistance to developing nations and granting them access to independent advice, such as from UNCTAD, to enable their full participation in WTO activities.

CONCLUSION

Reforming the World Trade Organisation is of critical importance, without which the trade multilateralism will be beset with problems, thereby pushing the world to higher levels of uncertainty and volatility.

FED RATE CUT

#BANKING #MONETARYPOLICY
#EXTERNALSECTOR

PRIMARY
SOURCE The Indian
EXPRESS

The United States Federal Reserve (henceforth just 'the Fed'), which is in charge of the country's monetary policy, has announced that it will cut the benchmark interest rate — the Federal Funds Rate — by 50 basis points, or half a percentage point. This is the first rate cut since March 2020.

WHAT IS A FED RATE?

- Like other central banks such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the **US Fed influences employment and inflation** primarily by using monetary policy tools to control the availability and cost of credit in the economy.
- The Fed's **primary tool of monetary policy is the federal funds rate**, popularly known as **Fed Rate**. Changes in fed rate influence other interest rates — which in turn influence borrowing costs for households and businesses, as well as broader financial conditions.

- During times of recession or economic slowdown, the Federal Reserve reduces the Fed Rate to increase the money supply in the US economy. (**Expansionary Monetary Policy**)

IMPLICATIONS FOR US ECONOMY

- **Cheaper Credit:** When interest rates go down in an economy, it becomes cheaper to borrow; so households are more inclined to buy more goods and services, and businesses have an incentive to borrow funds to expand operations, buy equipment, or to invest in new projects.
- **Spurs Demand:** Improved demand for goods and services ends up pushing up wages, and helps rekindle the growth cycle.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

- **Increased Foreign Investments:** A lower interest rate in the U.S. could make Indian assets (stocks, bonds) more attractive to foreign investors as they seek higher returns in emerging markets. This could lead to increased foreign portfolio investment (FPI) in India, driving up Indian stock prices.
- **Reduced Capital Outflows:** When U.S. interest rates are cut, Indian investors and businesses may be less likely to repatriate capital to the U.S., stabilising capital flows within India.
- **Rupee Appreciation:** A Fed rate cut could weaken the U.S. dollar as global investors shift to other currencies offering better returns. This could lead to the appreciation of the Indian Rupee (INR), making imports cheaper but potentially reducing export competitiveness.
- **RBI's Stance:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) might respond by adjusting its own interest rates. If global liquidity increases due to a Fed rate cut, the **RBI could have more flexibility to reduce interest rates** in India to support growth without fearing capital flight.
- **Global Economic Growth:** If the Fed rate cut stimulates growth in the U.S., it may have **positive spillover effects on India's exports**, particularly in services like IT and business process outsourcing.

YIELD CURVE

#MOBILISATIONOFRESOURCES

PRIMARY
SOURCE

BusinessLine

Lower shorter-tenor borrowing by the Government, impending rate cuts, and higher FPI positioning in the sub-7-year tenor could reinstate the bull-steepening bias of the Government Securities yield curve in the near term. Bull steepening refers to a phenomenon where short-term interest rates fall faster than long-term rates, resulting in a higher spread between the two rates and a steepening of the yield curve.

WHAT ARE GOVERNMENT SECURITIES?

Government Securities (G-Sec) are debt instruments (bonds) issued by governments to raise capital. The value at which the G-Sec is issued is regarded as its face value and the value at which the G-Sec is traded in the secondary market is referred to as its market value.

WHAT IS A BOND YIELD?

It is the return received by the investor on the capital invested on a particular bond. The yield of the bond depends on the market value of the bond.

- If the market value increases above the face value of the bond (the price at which it is purchased in the primary market when it was issued), then the **rate of returns on the purchase of the bond in the secondary market decreases**. This phenomenon is often known as **softening of bond yields**.
- On the other hand if the market value decreases below the face value of the bond, then the **rate of returns on the purchase of the bond in the secondary market increases**. This phenomenon is known as **hardening of bond yields**.

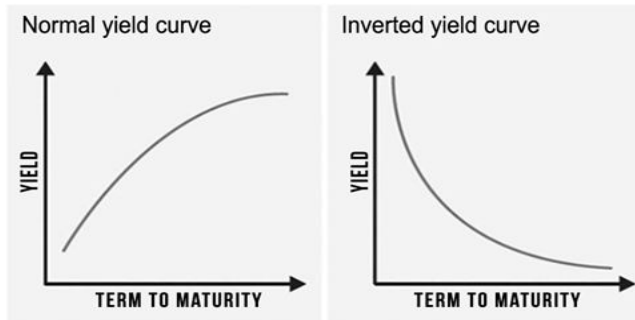
WHAT IS A YIELD CURVE?

- A yield curve is a graph that depicts yields on bonds ranging from short-term debt such as one month to longer-term debt such as 30 years.

TYPES OF YIELD CURVE & THEIR INTERPRETATION

- The yield on the bonds depends upon the risk involved. Higher the risks, higher would be the yields.
- **Normal Yield Curve:** Normally, the yield on short term maturity bonds is lower than that of long-term maturity bonds. This can be attributed to increased risk in the longer term (say 30 years). A normal yield curve indicates yields on longer-term bonds may continue to rise, responding to periods of economic expansion.
- **Inverted Yield Curve:** When there are signs of slowdown in an economy, it would mean that the

economy faces risk in the short term. However, in the long term, the economy may come back to normalcy. Hence, due to this, the yield on the short-term bonds becomes higher than the yields of long-term bonds. (Inverted Yield Curve). Hence, an inverted yield curve points towards a probable economic recession.



GST COUNCIL

#CONSTITUTIONALBODIES #CENTRESTATE

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

The 54th meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council concluded recently.

*The smooth and efficient administration of the goods and services tax (GST) requires co-operation and co-ordination between the Centre and the States. In order to facilitate this consultation process, **the 101st Amendment Act of 2016 provided for the establishment of a Goods and Services Tax Council or the GST Council.***

ABOUT GST COUNCIL

The Council is a joint forum of the Centre and the States.

• Who Constitutes It?

- **Article 279-A** empowers the **President** to constitute a GST Council by an order.

• Functions:

It is required to make recommendations to the Centre and the States on the following matters:

- The taxes, cesses and surcharges levied by the Centre, the States and the local bodies that would get merged in GST.
- **The goods and services that may be subjected to GST or exempted from GST.**
- Model GST Laws, principles of levy, apportionment of GST levied on supplies in the course of inter-state trade or commerce and the principles that govern the place of supply.

- The threshold limit of turnover below which goods and services may be exempted from GST.
- The rates including floor rates with bands of GST.
- Any special rate or rates for a specified period to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.

• Composition:

As per Article 279A(2) of the Constitution, the GST Council shall consist of the following members:

- The Union Finance Minister - Chairperson
- The Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance - Member
- The Minister in charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government - Members
- Any person nominated by the Governor of the State where there is a proclamation of emergency under Article 356 of the Constitution of India.

SCALE BASED

REGULATIONS OF NBFCs

#MOBILISATIONOFRESOURCES

#INCLUSIVEGROWTH

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

SECONDARY SOURCE Reserve Bank of India

The Reserve Bank had introduced scale-based regulation (SBR) for NBFCs in response to their increasing systemic importance.

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE REGULATION OF NBFCs?

- **Growth of the Sector:** Size of balance sheet of NBFCs (including HFCs) has more than doubled from Rs 20.72 lakh crore (2015) to Rs 49.22 lakh crore (2020).
- **Increased lending by NBFCs:** The share of credit given by NBFCs increased from 8.5 % (2012-13) to 11.5 % (2019-20). However, bank credit as a proportion of GDP declined from 52% to 50% during the same period.
- **Interconnectedness:** NBFCs mobilise more than 50% of funds by borrowing from Banks. This interconnectedness between Banks and NBFCs has systemic implications. Failure of large NBFCs such as IL&FS could have adverse implications on the financial health of the Banks.

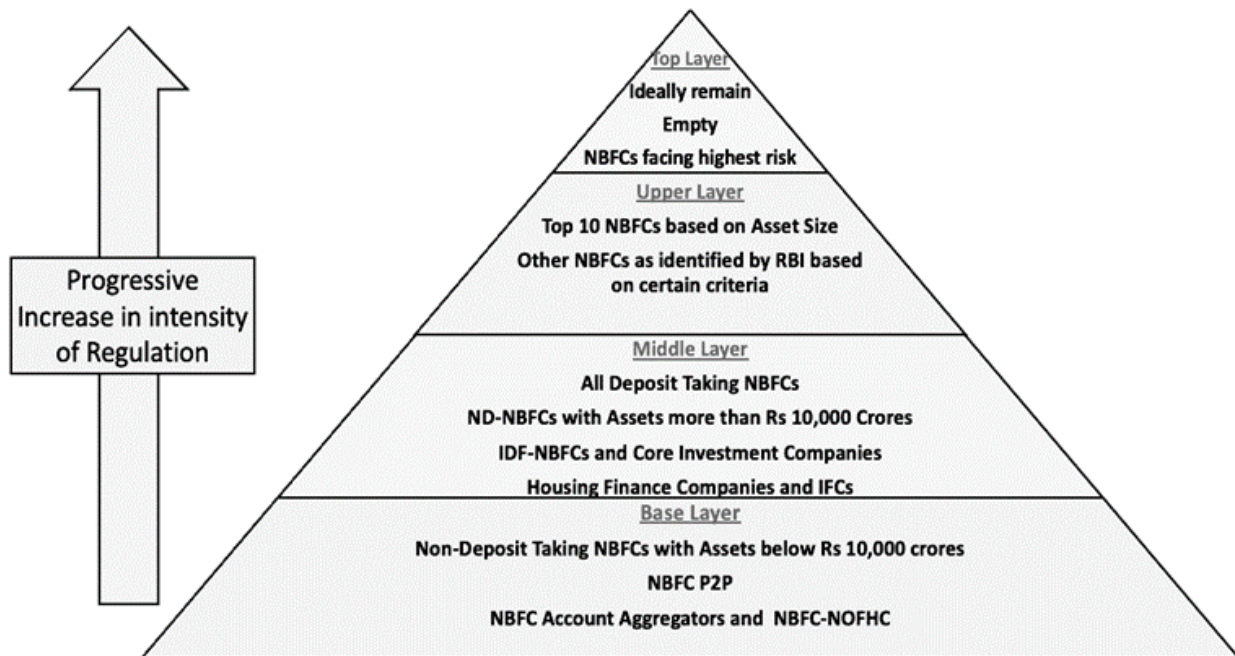
- **Recent failure of large NBFCs** such as IL&FS, Dewan Housing Finance etc. has also highlighted the need for strengthening supervisory tools for NBFCs.

WHAT IS SCALE BASED REGULATION OF NBFCs?

- The scale-based regulation is **based on the principle of proportionality** and **narrows the regulatory**

arbitrage between banks and large NBFCs while allowing for operational flexibility.

- Under this regulation, NBFCs are **segregated** into four layers **based on their size, activity, and perceived level of riskiness**: (i) Base Layer (NBFC-BL), (ii) Middle Layer (NBFC-ML), (iii) Upper Layer (NBFC-UL), and (iv) Top Layer (NBFC-TL).



REGULATORY CHANGES UNDER THE SBR FRAMEWORK

- **Applicability:** Any regulatory stipulation applicable to a lower layer under the new NBFC categorisation will automatically apply to a higher layer, unless otherwise notified by the RBI.
- **Increase in Net owned Fund (NOF) requirement:** The RBI has increased the minimum net owned fund (NOF) requirement for NBFC-ICC from Rs 2 crores to Rs 10 crores. For NBFC-MFI and NBFC-Factor, the NOF requirement has been increased from Rs 5 crores to Rs 10 crores.
- **Changes to NPA classification norms:** Presently, all NBFCs other than NBFC-MFIs classify loans as NPA if it is due for more than 180 days. The RBI has prescribed a uniform overdue period of more than 90 days for classification of loans as NPA for all categories of NBFCs. Hence, going forward, the NPA classification requirements for banks and NBFCs would be aligned.

- **Extension of PCA Framework:** The Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework, applicable to banks, has been extended to NBFCs in the middle and upper layers. Under the PCA framework, NBFCs need to undertake timely remedial measures if they breach the prescribed risk thresholds.

SEVEN MAJOR SCHEMES FOR AGRICULTURE

#AGRICULTURE #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

SECONDARY SOURCE pib

The Union Cabinet has approved seven schemes to improve farmers' lives and increase their incomes at a total outlay of Rs 14,235.30 Crore.

WHAT ARE THESE SEVEN SCHEMES?

1. **Digital Agriculture Mission:** based on the structure of Digital Public Infrastructure, Digital Agriculture Mission

will use technology for improving farmers' lives. The Mission has a total outlay of Rs 2,817 crores. It comprises two foundational pillars

a. Agri Stack:

- Farmers registry
- Village land maps registry
- Crop Sown Registry

b. Krishi Decision Support System

- Geospatial data
- Drought/flood monitoring
- Weather/satellite data
- Groundwater/water availability data
- Modelling for crop yield and insurance

o The Mission has provision for

- Soil profile
- Digital crop estimation
- Digital yield modelling
- Connect for crop loan
- Modern technologies like AI and Big Data
- Connect with buyers
- Bring new knowledge on mobile phones

2. **Crop science for food and nutritional security:** with a total outlay of Rs 3,979 crore. The initiative will prepare farmers for climate resilience and provide for food security by 2047. It has following pillars:

- o Research and education
- o Plant genetic resource management
- o Genetic improvement for food and fodder crop
- o Pulse and oilseed crop improvement
- o Improvement of commercial crops
- o Research on insects, microbes, pollinators etc.

3. **Strengthening Agricultural Education, Management and Social Sciences:** with a total outlay of Rs 2,291 Crore the measure will prepare agriculture students and researchers for current challenges and comprises the following:

- o Under Indian Council of Agri Research

- o Modernising agri research and education

- o In line with New Education Policy 2020

- o Use of latest technology ... Digital DPI, AI, big data, remote, etc

- o Include natural farming and climate resilience

4. **Sustainable livestock health and production:** with a total outlay of Rs 1,702 crore, the decision aims to Increase farmers income from livestock and dairy. It comprises the following

- o Animal health management and veterinary education
- o Dairy production and technology development
- o Animal genetic resource management, production and improvement
- o Animal nutrition and small ruminant production and development

5. **Sustainable development of Horticulture:** with a total outlay of Rs 1129.30 crore the measure is aimed at increasing farmers' income from horticulture plants. It comprises the following

- o Tropical, sub-tropical and temperate horticulture crops
- o Root, tuber, bulbous and arid crops
- o Vegetable, floriculture, and mushroom crops
- o Plantation, spices, medicinal, and aromatic plants

6. **Strengthening of Krishi Vigyan Kendra** with an outlay of Rs 1,202 crore. These centres play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and best practices to farmers across the country, helping to improve their productivity and income. The strengthening of KVKs will ensure that farmers have access to the latest agricultural techniques and innovations.

7. **Natural Resource Management** with an outlay of Rs 1,115 crore. It is focused on the sustainable management of natural resources which is essential for long-term viability of agricultural practices. By promoting sustainable resource management, the government aims to safeguard the future of Indian agriculture.

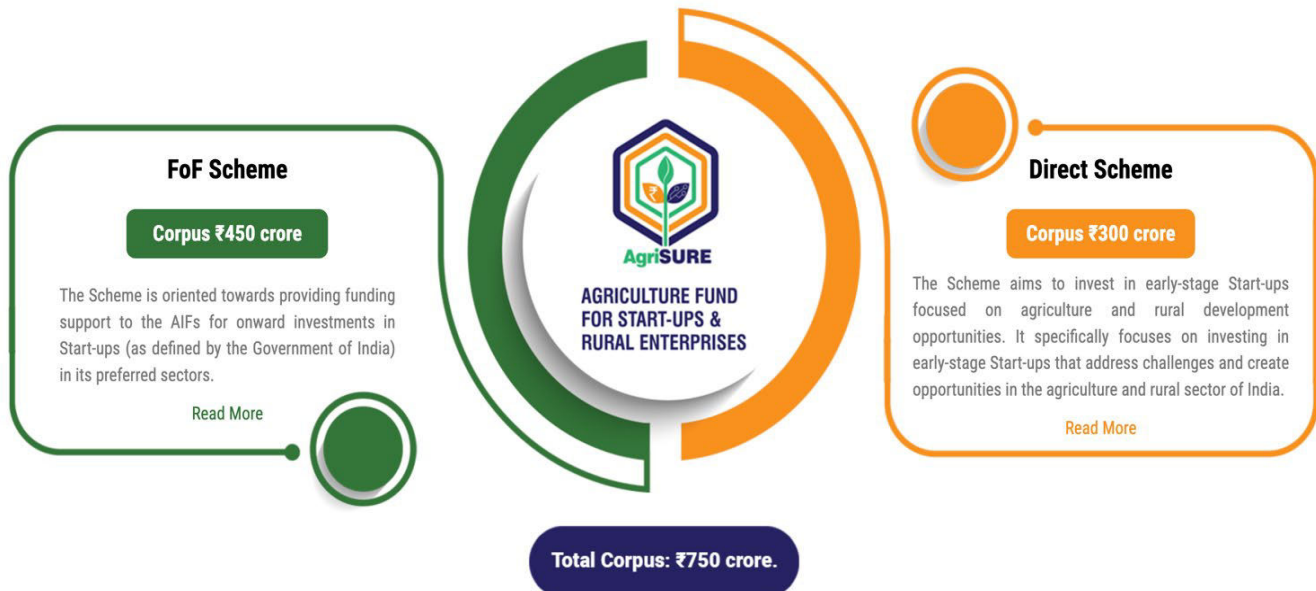
AGRISURE FUND

#AGRICULTURE #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY
SOURCE

pib

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare has launched AgriSURE Scheme which is a Rs 750 crore blended capital fund to finance startups and rural enterprises.



ABOUT AgriSURE SCHEME

- AgriSURE stands for 'Agri Fund for Start-ups and Rural Enterprises'. This Fund aims to support innovative, technology driven, high-risk, high impact activities in agriculture and allied sectors.
- AgriSURE aims to support start-ups and agripreneurs through investments in sector-specific, sector-agnostic, debt AIFs as well as direct equity support to start-ups working in agriculture and rural development sectors.
- Registered as a Category-II Alternative Investment Fund with SEBI.
- Components of AgriSURE Fund:** There are two components of AgriSURE fund:
 - AgriSURE - Fund of Fund Scheme (Rs 450 crore):**
 - This component is designed to provide funding to Category I and Category II Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) that make onward investments in Start-ups in preferred sectors of the fund.
 - Eligible AIFs should be incorporated in India and can be investing in equity related instruments and/or debt securities.
 - The scheme will require sector agnostic funds to invest into the desired number of units and/or amount into preferred sectors of scheme.
 - AgriSURE - Direct Scheme (Rs 300 crore):**
 - This component is designed to make direct equity investments in early-stage start-ups focused on agriculture and rural development in India. These early-stage start-ups should be recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) and should be incorporated in India.
 - The scheme can invest a maximum of Rs 25 crores in a single start-up, subject to AIF regulations.
 - The scheme will invest in equity, compulsorily convertible preference shares or other equity related instruments.
 - The scheme may reinvest in successful portfolio companies during subsequent funding rounds to
- Total Corpus:** Rs 750 crores. The total corpus of Rs 750 crores has contributed by the following:
 - Rs 250 crores to be contributed by Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.
 - Rs 250 crores to be contributed by NABARD.
- The scheme can invest up to a maximum of 5% of the corpus of the AIF or Rs 25 crore in one AIF, whichever is lower.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Rs. 250 crores to be mobilized from banks, insurance companies and private investors.
- **Duration:** The fund's duration is 10 years from the date of inception which can be extended by two years.
- **Investment Manager:** NABVENTURES Ltd. (a wholly owned subsidiary of NABARD) will act as the fund manager for AgriSURE fund.
- **Target beneficiaries:**
 - Start-ups working in agriculture & rural development sectors like Agri-tech, Food Processing, Animal husbandry, Fisheries, Supply Chain Management, Farm Mechanization, Biotechnology, Waste Management, Renewable energy, Agri value chain including Primary Cooperative Societies development, Support for FPOs, Technology support at Farm level and Climate change etc.
 - The fund aims to support about 85 start-ups in the target areas by the end of its life.

BENEFITS OF AgriSURE FUND

- Encourage young entrepreneurs with innovative, technology-driven ideas and willingness to take high-risk, while engaging in high-impact activities in agriculture and Agri-tech.
- Boost opportunities available for efficient and more profitable forward and backward linkage systems in the rural space that help make the farm produce value chain system stronger, robust and more systematic by encouraging start-ups operating in these activities and bring in new entrepreneurs into this field of agri-business.
- Attract more investment in agri and rural start-up ecosystem by making contribution to various Alternative Investment Funds.
- Create an investment-friendly climate and accelerate growth of start-ups related to agriculture and allied activities and increase their investment absorption capacities.
- Increase and sustain capital commitments to sector specific AIFs in order to enable them to provide equity support to Agri & Agri-tech start-ups engaged in serving farmers and FPOs/FPCs/Primary Cooperative Societies.
- Increase average size and number of investments by Alternative Investment Funds in Agri & Agri-tech start-ups.

- Provide liquidity to existing Agri & Agri-tech start-ups that are unable to upscale their business due to dearth of access to various kinds of financing like equity, debt instruments, etc.
- Enlist more players in the farm related ecosystem for enabling FPOs/FPCs/ Primary Cooperative Societies to access latest automated farm processes and machinery through Agri tech Start-ups.
- Create additional employment opportunities for the technically qualified rural and urban youth to look up to agriculture as a business opportunity.
- Retain existing rural youth in agriculture and encourage the younger generation to take to agriculture by providing newer technologies, techniques and equipments at their doorsteps from time to time.
- Encouraging the urban youth to establish new Start-ups in the rural agricultural ecosystem to have a win-win situation for both young farmers and the urban entrepreneurs by working in their respective domains to benefit each other.

INDIA WEIGHS RUSSIA'S 'DOABLE' SWIFT ALTERNATIVE

#BANKING #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY
SOURCE BusinessLine

Russia has proposed using its own financial messaging system, an alternative to SWIFT, to facilitate rupee-rouble trade settlements with India. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has found the proposal "doable" but ongoing discussions are still in progress. Diplomatic considerations are also influencing the decision.

WHAT IS SWIFT?

- Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is a secure financial message carrier that transports messages from one bank to its intended bank recipient to facilitate cross-border payments.
- It does not facilitate funds transfer: rather, it sends only payment orders.

- It is a global member-owned cooperative headquartered in Brussels, founded in 1973.
- Presently, it has more than 11,000 Banks and financial institutions which are spread across 200 countries. Prior to SWIFT, the only reliable means of message confirmation for international funds transfer was Telex. It was discontinued due to a range of issues such as low speed, security concerns etc.
- SWIFT hosts an annual conference known as Sibos (Swift International Banking Operations Seminar) in various cities across the world.

HOW DOES THE SWIFT WORK?

- SWIFT Code or Bank Identifier Code: Every Bank has a SWIFT Code consisting of 8 or 11 characters.
- An 11-digit code refers to a specific branch, while an 8-digit code (or one ending in 'XXX') refers to the bank's head office. It is also referred to Bank Identifier Code (BIC).
- It is like the IFSC code used for domestic interbank transfers, with Swift being used for international transfers.

ALTERNATIVES TO SWIFT

- Russia developed its own alternative to SWIFT called the System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS). But this system has struggled to establish itself in international transactions.
- Similarly, China has launched the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System in 2015 to internationalise the use of the yuan. It allows global banks to clear cross-border yuan transactions directly onshore.

PM ELECTRIC DRIVE REVOLUTION IN INNOVATIVE VEHICLE ENHANCEMENT (PM E- DRIVE) SCHEME

#INDUSTRY #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The Union Cabinet has approved a new scheme called PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) for the promotion of electric vehicles (EV) in

India replacing Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME India Phase II).

Nodal Ministry: The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) will implement the new scheme with a total outlay of Rs 10,900 crore over a period of two years.

MAJOR COMPONENTS

- **Subsidies/Demand Incentives:** Supported Vehicles include e-2Ws, e-3Ws, e-buses. Signed and Aadhaar authenticated e-vouchers, generated on the scheme portal, are essential for claiming incentives.
- **e-Ambulances** for promoting comfortable patient transport.
- **e-Buses:** Procurement of 14,028 e-buses for STUs/public transport agencies. Demand Aggregation will be managed by CESL in cities with populations over 40 lakh. Preferences will be given to cities/states replacing old STU buses through authorised scrapping centres (RVSFs).
- **e-Trucks:** Incentives provided with a scrapping certificate from MoRTH approved RVSFs.
- **Public Charging Stations (EVPCS):** Installations of fast chargers for e-4Ws, e-buses and e-2W/3Ws.
- **Modernization of Testing Agencies:** With an objective to upgrade test agencies to handle new and emerging EV technologies.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- **Incentives:** Provide upfront incentives for EV purchase.
- **Infrastructure:** Facilitate establishment of essential EV charging infrastructure.
- **Environmental Impact:** Reduce transportation's environmental footprint and improve air quality.
- **EV Industry Growth:** Promote a competitive and resilient EV manufacturing sector.
- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat:** Encourage domestic manufacturing and strengthen the EV supply chain.
- **Investment and Employment:** Spur investment in the EV sector and create job opportunities along the value chain.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

#EXTERNAL SECTOR #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** retained India's growth forecast for the current fiscal at 7% and said that the economy is expected to accelerate in the coming quarters on improved farm output, and higher Government spending.

ABOUT ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

- The Asian Development Bank's primary mission is to "foster economic growth and cooperation" among countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- **Headquarters:** Manilla, Philippines.
- **Structure:**
 - The Agreement Establishing the Asian Development Bank, known as the ADB Charter, vests all the powers of the institution in the Board of Governors, which in turn delegates some of these powers to the Board of Directors.
 - The ADB's highest policy-making body is its Board of Governors, which comprises one representative from each member.
 - The Board of Governors meets formally once a year during ADB's Annual Meeting.
- **Membership:**
 - It is open to members and associate members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.
 - It's also open to other regional countries and non-regional developed countries that are members of the U.N. or of any of its specialised agencies.
 - At present, there are a total of 68 members, which is made up of 48 regional and 19 non-regional members. India is a founding member of ADB
 - Although the majority of the Bank's members are from the Asia-Pacific region, the industrialised nations are also well-represented.
 - ADB's five largest shareholders are Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%).
- **Source of Capital:**

- The ADB raises capital regularly through the international bond markets.
- The ADB also relies on member contributions, retained earnings from lending, and the repayment of loans for the funding of the organisation.

• Functions:

- The Asian Development Bank provides assistance to its developing member countries, the private sector, and public-private partnerships through grants, loans, technical assistance, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- The ADB regularly facilitates policy dialogues and provides advisory services. They also use co-financing operations that tap official, commercial, and export credit sources while providing assistance.

• Nature of Financing:

- The ADB provides both private financing and sovereign (public) financing.
- Private sector efforts focus on projects that help promote private investments in the region that will have significant development impact and will lead to accelerated, sustainable, and inclusive growth.
- Public-sector financing provides funding for member countries with flexibility in determining how they can achieve development goals.

ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB)

#EXTERNAL SECTOR #PRELIMSSNIPPETS

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

India's Finance Minister urged the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** to maintain a client-centric approach and help low-income member countries access financial resources via technical assistance during her meeting with AIIB President before the 9th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

ABOUT ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB)

- Founded in 2016, is a multilateral development bank **initiated by China**. It was established as a response to

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

the growing demand for infrastructure investment in Asia.

- It aims to collectively improve economic and social outcomes in Asia.
- **Headquarters is in** Beijing, China.
- It has 110 members. India is a Founding Member of AIIB.

- Membership in the AIIB is open to all members of the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank and is divided into regional and non-regional.
- All powers of the Bank are vested in Board of Governors, which is the **highest decision-making body under AIIB Articles of Agreement**.
- China holds the largest voting share in the AIIB at 26.5%, followed by India with 7.5%, and Russia with 5.97%.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADB AND AIIB

Category	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
Year of Establishment	1966	2016
Primary Mission	To foster economic growth and cooperation among Asia-Pacific countries	To improve economic and social outcomes in Asia
Headquarters	Manila, Philippines	Beijing, China
Membership	68 members (48 regional, 19 non-regional)	110 members
Largest Shareholders	Japan and the U.S. (each with 15.6% of total shares)	China (26.5%), India (7.5%), Russia (5.97%)
Structure	Board of Governors (1 representative from each member) and Board of Directors	Board of Governors as the highest decision-making body

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme:

1. The PM E-DRIVE Scheme has an allocated budget of Rs 10,900 crore for a duration of three years.
2. The scheme includes a component for the procurement of e-buses aimed at enhancing public transportation.
3. An essential feature of the scheme is the use of e-vouchers, which must be signed by both the buyer and the dealer to claim demand incentives.
4. The scheme supports the introduction of e-ambulances, with performance and safety

standards to be developed in consultation with relevant authorities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2, 3, and 4 only
- (c) 1, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 2 and 4 only

Q2. With reference to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, consider the following statements:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. As per the Constitution, the GST Council is headed by the Prime Minister and the Union Minister of Finance serves as a vice chairperson.
2. GST Council recommends goods and services that may be subjected to or exempted from GST.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. With reference to Indian economy, consider the following:

1. Reduction in capital outflow
2. Reduction in value of Rupee
3. Increase in demand for Indian exports

Which one of the above are the likely consequences of a rate cut by the US Federal Reserve?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. The primary mission of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is to foster economic growth and cooperation among the countries of the Asian region only.
2. Membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is open to all members of the World Bank.
3. India is a founding member of both the ADB and the AIIB.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q5. With reference to Asian Infrastructure investment Bank (AIIB), consider the following statements:

1. AIIB has more than 80 member nations.
2. India is the largest shareholder in AIIB.
3. AIIB does not have any members from outside Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** The Universal Basic Income, the implementation of which has repeatedly been debated in India, seeks to alleviate poverty. Critically discuss the possibility of UBI in India.
- Q2.** What are the key areas of reform if the WTO has to survive in the present context of the deadlocked negotiations, especially keeping in mind the interest of India?

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-a

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

INDIAN CONSTITUTION AS A LIVING DOCUMENT

#INDIAN CONSTITUTION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

Chief Justice said the Indian Constitution had thrived over the years as a '**living document**'. "Indian Constitution is a Living Document," means that the Constitution of our country needs to be dynamic in order to adapt to changing needs of the society, its ideals and aspirations.

HOW CAN A CONSTITUTION EVOLVE?

- **Amendment to the Constitution:** The evolution of the constitution takes place by amendment, and this **power of amendment is with Parliament** under **Article 368** of the Indian Constitution, which helps us to add new laws or change/repeal existing ones. Indian constitution under Article 368 ensures any kind of finality and infallibility of the constitution is avoided.
- **Interpretation of our Constitution:** The Constitution also evolves in the way we interpret the meaning of the text present in our Constitution. Even without amending it, the interpretation of the constitution or the statutes would change from time to time, through the **active role of Judiciary**.

ARTICLE 368 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Article 368 grants power to the parliament for the amendment of the constitution. An amendment can be made by **following the due procedure** prescribed in the Constitution.
- **An amendment can be initiated by introducing a bill** in either house of parliament and should be

passed by both. There are three main ways to amend the Indian constitution.

- First, by a **simple majority of parliament**, in which a majority of more than 50% of members present and vote in the house. By a simple majority, there are a number of provisions that can be amended in the Indian constitution, like rules of procedure in parliament, salaries and allowances to members of parliament, abolition or creation of legislative councils in states and many more.
- Second, by a **special majority of parliament**, with a two-thirds majority of members present and voting in support of half of the house's total strength. A special majority is mostly used for amending the Indian constitution. There are various provisions that can be altered by a special majority, including the removal of the Supreme Court and High Court judges, a resolution by the state legislature to eliminate or create a legislative council, modifying the directive principle of state policy, and so on.
- Third, by a **two-thirds majority in parliament and state consent**. It is a hybrid of special majority and simple majority voting. The federal structure enshrined in the constitution can only be changed by a special majority of parliament and the consent of states. It requires state ratification. The distribution of legislative power between the Union and the States, the election of the President, the Supreme Court and the High Courts, state representation in parliament, and the extent of executive power of the Union and the States are among the provisions that can be amended by this majority.

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- In the **Kesavananda Bharati case of 1973**, the Supreme Court ruled that parliament has the power to amend any part of the constitution except the basic structure of the constitution.

MANIFESTATION OF DYNAMISM OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION

1. Through Constitutional Amendments: Article 368 has helped in achieving the goal of inclusive and equitable society by ensuring social, economic and political justice.

- **Ensuring Social Justice:**
 - **Abolition of Zamindari System:** The 1st Constitutional Amendment (1951) abolished the zamindari system, ensuring land reforms and redistribution to marginalised farmers, thus promoting equity.
 - **Reservations for Marginalised Sections:** Various amendments, such as the 1st, 93rd, and 103rd Constitutional Amendments, introduced and expanded reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in education and employment.
 - **Institutional Support for SC/ST Communities:** The 65th and 89th Constitutional Amendments established the National Commission for SCs and STs, providing an institutional mechanism for addressing issues faced by these communities.
- **Promoting Political Accountability:**
 - **Anti-Defection Law:** The 52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985) introduced the anti-defection law to curb political corruption by preventing elected representatives from switching parties for personal gain.
 - **Limitation on the Size of Cabinets:** The 91st Constitutional Amendment (2003) imposed restrictions on the size of both central and state cabinets, ensuring political accountability and fiscal discipline.
- **Democratic Decentralisation**
 - **Strengthening Local Governance:** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) gave constitutional status to Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), promoting grassroots democracy and realising the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). This move empowered local governments and enhanced public participation in decision-

making.

- **Achieving Economic Justice Introduction of the GST:**
 - **The 101st Constitutional Amendment (2016)** created the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, simplifying the taxation structure and promoting economic justice by ensuring uniform tax laws across the country.
- **Abrogating Special Provisions for Jammu & Kashmir- Article 370:**

- The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 marked a historic moment, removing special autonomy for Jammu & Kashmir and integrating the region more fully into the Indian Union, paving the way for equitable development.

2. Through Judicial Interpretations: The judiciary has played a pivotal role in interpreting the Constitution to meet the evolving needs of society. Through landmark judgments, the courts have expanded the scope of fundamental rights, ensuring justice and upholding democratic values.

- **Recognition of LGBTQ+ Rights:**
 - **Navtej Singh Johar Case (2018):** Supreme Court decriminalised Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which had criminalised consensual homosexual relations. This landmark judgement recognized the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and upheld their right to equality, dignity, and personal liberty, in line with **Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution.**
- **Abolition of Triple Talaq:**
 - **Shayara Bano Case (2017):** Supreme Court declared the practice of Triple Talaq (instant divorce in Islam) **unconstitutional**, upholding the rights of Muslim women to equality and dignity under **Articles 14 and 21**. This judgement significantly advanced gender justice in India.
- **Expansion of the Scope of Article 21:**
 - **Right to Privacy: Puttaswamy Case (2017)**
 - **Background:** In response to concerns about the collection and use of personal data, especially related to Aadhaar, the Supreme Court was asked to determine if the right to privacy was protected under the Constitution.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court ruled that the **Right to Privacy is an integral part of Article 21**. It asserted that privacy is essential to the dignity

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- and autonomy of individuals, ensuring protection from state overreach.
- **Impact:** This judgement laid the groundwork for further judicial developments concerning data protection, surveillance, and individual freedoms.
 - **Right to a Clean Environment: Subhash Kumar vs State of Bihar (1991)**
 - **Background:** Environmental pollution has been affecting citizens' health and well-being, prompting legal action.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court held that the **Right to Life under Article 21 includes the Right to a Pollution-Free Environment**. This expanded the scope of Article 21 to include environmental protection, making it a state's responsibility to maintain ecological balance.
 - **Impact:** This case paved the way for the development of environmental jurisprudence in India, making environmental protection a constitutional mandate.
 - **Right to Education: Unni Krishnan vs State of Andhra Pradesh (1993)**
 - **Background:** The issue revolved around the affordability and accessibility of education in India.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court ruled that the Right to Education is implicit in the Right to Life and that **every child has the right to free and compulsory education until the age of 14**.
 - **Impact:** This judgement **eventually led to the introduction of Article 21A**, which made **education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14** through the 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002).
 - **Right to Food: PUCL vs Union of India (2001)**
 - **Background:** Filed during a period of widespread drought and starvation, this case highlighted the failure of the government to ensure adequate food for its citizens.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court ruled that the Right to Life under Article 21 includes the Right to Food. It directed the government to ensure the distribution of food grains to the poor and needy through public distribution systems.
 - **Impact:** This ruling laid the foundation for food security programs, culminating in the **National Food Security Act (2013)**, which aims to provide subsidised food to two-thirds of the population.
 - **Right to Shelter: Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)**
 - **Background:** This case was filed by pavement dwellers in Mumbai who were being evicted by the municipal authorities.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court held that the **Right to Life includes the Right to Shelter**. The Court declared that a **person cannot be deprived of their livelihood**, which includes the right to live with dignity, without a just and fair procedure.
 - **Impact:** The judgement has been crucial in protecting slum dwellers and has influenced subsequent policies regarding the right to housing.
 - **Right to Die with Dignity: Common Cause vs Union of India (2018)**
 - **Background:** The case questioned whether individuals suffering from terminal illnesses could refuse life-sustaining treatment.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court ruled that the **Right to Life under Article 21 includes the Right to Die with Dignity**. It **legalised passive euthanasia**, allowing individuals to refuse medical treatment in the event of terminal illness or a persistent vegetative state.
 - **Impact:** This judgement reinforced personal autonomy and paved the way for further discussions on medical ethics and the right to life.
 - **Right to Livelihood: Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978)**
 - **Background:** In this case, Maneka Gandhi's passport was impounded without providing her reasons for the same.
 - **Judgement:** The Supreme Court ruled that the **Right to Life encompasses the Right to Livelihood**. The Court also broadened the interpretation of personal liberty, ruling that any procedure depriving a person of their life or liberty must be fair, just, and reasonable.
 - **Impact:** This judgement set a precedent for interpreting Article 21 expansively and introduced

the concept of due process of law, ensuring more protection for citizens' rights.

WATCHING CHILD SEX ABUSE MATERIAL IS AN OFFENCE: SUPREME COURT

#SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY
SOURCE

THE HINDU

Supreme Court has overturned the Madras High Court decision that mere possession or storage of any pornographic material is not an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POCSO Act.)

ABOUT THE POCSO ACT: The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** was enacted in 2012 by the Government of India to address sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Key features of the act are:

- **Child-Centric Legislation:** The Act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides comprehensive protection against offenses like sexual harassment, assault, pornography, and trafficking.
- **Gender-Neutral:** POCSO is gender-neutral, meaning both male and female children are protected under its provisions.
- **Stringent Punishments:** The Act prescribes severe penalties, including life imprisonment and fines, for the perpetrators of sexual offences against children. The severity of the punishment increases if the offence involves abuse by someone in a position of trust or authority.
- **Special Courts:** The Act mandates the establishment of **special courts** to ensure speedy trials of cases involving sexual offences against children. These courts are designed to minimise trauma to the child during the legal process.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** It makes reporting of such offences mandatory, and failure to do so is a punishable offence.
- **Child-Friendly Procedures:** The Act incorporates **child-friendly procedures** for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation, and trial of offences. For example, statements of the child can be recorded at the child's residence and in the presence of a parent or guardian.
- **Punishment for False Complaints:** The Act also contains provisions for punishing individuals who file false complaints with malicious intent.
- **Amendments:** In 2019, the Act was amended to include harsher punishments for offenders, including the death penalty for aggravated sexual assault.

KEY FACTS ABOUT CHILD RELATED CRIMES

- In the year 2021, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 51,863 cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.
- Out of these, 64% of cases were reported under Sections 3 and 5 (penetrative sexual assault and aggravated penetrative sexual assault respectively).
- Further analysis of the data shows that 99% of the cases were committed against girls.
- In many cases, girls become pregnant and bear several physical and mental health concerns, which are further aggravated when they are disowned or abandoned by their families or are orphans.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS WITH RESPECT TO POCSO ACT

- **Overburdened courts:** Special POCSO courts are often burdened with a high volume of cases, leading to significant delays in delivering justice.
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Many courts lack child-friendly infrastructure, which is crucial for the comfort and well-being of child victims during trial.
- **Low Conviction Rates:** Flawed or improper investigation by the police, lack of infrastructure to preserve digital evidence leads to low conviction rates.
- **Witnesses turning hostile:** Given the social stigma associated with sexual abuse, witnesses or even the victims may retract their statements under pressure or fear of societal backlash.
- **Underreporting:** Many cases go unreported due to the stigma surrounding sexual abuse, especially in conservative communities. Families fear societal judgement, resulting in the suppression of incidents.
- **Lack of awareness:** Both children and their guardians often remain unaware of their rights under POCSO, leading to underreporting.
- **False allegations:** There have been cases where the POCSO Act has been misused to file false complaints due to personal vendettas, particularly in family disputes or revenge cases. These false cases dilute the effectiveness of the law.

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- **Psychological trauma:** Children often suffer from severe trauma, which can hinder their ability to recount events during the investigation and trial.
- **Victim-blaming mentality:** In some cases, victims are subjected to inappropriate questions or insensitive handling by law enforcement or judicial authorities, further traumatising them.
- **Lack of Rehabilitation Support:** While the Act mandates care and protection, many survivors do not receive adequate psychological counselling or rehabilitation services. The lack of post-trial support for child victims can hinder their recovery.
- **Lack of Training for Law Enforcement:** Many police personnel, medical examiners, and judicial staff are inadequately trained in handling POCSO cases sensitively and according to child-friendly procedures. This can result in poor case management and mishandling of victims.
- **Age-Determination Challenges:** There are frequent disputes regarding the determination of the child's age, as many children do not have valid documentation like birth certificates. This sometimes leads to delays in case processing or misuse of the law.
- **Overlap with Other Laws: Clashes with Juvenile Justice Act:** When both the accused and the victim are minors, there is confusion about which law takes precedence—POCSO or the Juvenile Justice Act.
- **Teenage consensual relationships:** In cases involving teenagers in consensual relationships, the application of POCSO has been controversial. The law does not differentiate between consensual acts between minors and genuine cases of abuse.
- **Introduction of Death Penalty:** The death penalty for aggravated sexual assault may not be an effective deterrent.
- **Chemical Castration:** The idea of chemical castration as a punishment raises ethical and legal concerns among the legal fraternity.
- **Lack of Victim Rehabilitation:** Insufficient focus on post-trial support for victims.
- **Abuse on the rise:** Particularly after the Covid-19 outbreak, when new forms of cybercrime have emerged.
- **Criminalization of adolescent sex:** The CJI D Y Chandrachud asked lawmakers to look into growing

concern over criminalization under the POCSO Act of adolescents who engage in consensual sexual activity.

SUGGESTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- **Strengthen Investigation and Judicial Processes:** Ensure proper training for law enforcement and judicial staff to handle POCSO cases sensitively and efficiently, minimising delays.
- **Awareness and Reporting:** Increase public awareness to reduce stigma around reporting child sexual abuse cases.
- **Rehabilitation and Support:** Enhance victim support services, including psychological counselling and long-term rehabilitation.
- **Balanced Punishments:** Re-evaluate punitive measures like chemical castration and focus on rehabilitation over harsh penalties.
- **Improve Child-Friendly Procedures:** Ensure proper execution of child-friendly courtroom practices.

UNDERSTANDING CONSTITUTIONALISM

#POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The need to understand the values of Constitution and Constitutionalism on Teacher's Day.

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND INDIA

As constitutionalism is a political spirit or philosophy, it is **not necessary that the states which have a constitution must be embodied with the concept of constitutionalism.** According to **Douglas Greenberg**, Constitutionalism is a commitment to limitations on ordinary political power, it revolves around a political process, one that overlaps with democracy in seeking to balance state power and individual and collective rights, it draws on particular cultural and historical contexts from which it emanates, and it resides in public consciousness.

Positive constitutionalism:

Positive Constitutionalism challenges the understanding of seeing Constitutionalism entirely in terms of limits upon the State (**Negative Constitutionalism**). The positive aspect of Constitutionalism requires the State to be seen in the light of a "**Welfare State**". The positive version of Constitutionalism requires the **creation of effective and**

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

competent state institutions to ensure the well-being of its citizens. According to Professor **M.P. Singh** if a constitution ignores accommodation and respect for diversity and plurality in a society then it fails to meet the requirement of constitutionalism.

A written Constitution is no guarantee for Constitutionalism.

Even Nazi Germany had a constitution but that does not mean that it adhered to the philosophy of Constitutionalism be it a negative or positive aspect of it.

1. **SR Chaudhari vs State of Punjab:** "the mere existence of a constitution, by itself, does not ensure constitutionalism. What is important is the political traditions of the people and its spirit and determination to work out its constitutional salvation through the chosen system of its political organisation."
2. Unless primacy to democratic policies and individual rights is not given, Constitutionalism cannot survive. Subtle assaults to individual rights, especially freedom of Speech and Expression and privacy, such as sedition laws, surveillance laws, undermine Constitutionalism.
3. Again, in **RC Poudyal vs UOI:** Court said that, "**Mere existence of a Constitution, by itself, does not ensure constitutionalism or a constitutional culture. It is the political maturity and traditions of people that give meaning to a constitution which otherwise would merely embody the political hopes and ideals**".

FEATURES IN INDIAN CONTEXT

- **A state by constitution:** Indian constitution not just provides the rights and immunities to the citizen, but it also delineates the character and structure of the Indian State. Therefore, it can also be said that the **powers and extent of the Indian State are limited by the Constitution.**
- **Article 21 and Due process of law:** In **Swaran Singh vs State of UP:** The Court observed that **public power, including constitutional power, must never be exercised arbitrarily or malafide, and ordinarily guidelines for fair and equal execution are guarantees of valid use of power.** The power being of the greatest moment, cannot be a law unto itself but it must be informed by the finer canons of constitutionalism. These requirements of Law and of Due process restrict the power of the state. Any

violation of these principles would enable the courts to strike down the law.

- **Fundamental Rights: IR Coelho vs state of TN:** The principle of constitutionalism is based on the principle of legality which requires the **Courts to interpret the legislations on the presumption that the Parliament would not intend to legislate contrary to fundamental rights.** The Legislature can restrict fundamental rights, but it is impossible for laws protecting fundamental rights to be impliedly repealed by future statutes.
- **Written constitution:** Being a written Constitution it firstly provides for a limited government, which is the core of Constitutionalism. The sovereign powers are divided among 3 organs of the government. **Powers of each organ are defined by the constitution and no organ, or its instrumentalities can transgress its limits.**
- **Separation of power: NCT Of Delhi VS UOI:** "The essence of constitutionalism is the control of power by its distribution among several state organs or offices in such a way that they are each subjected to reciprocal controls and forced to cooperate in formulating the will of the state."

SECULARISM IN INDIA

#RIGHTS ISSUES #PHILOSOPHY OF CONSTITUTION

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has remarked that Secularism is a western concept which was introduced during an emergency.

SECULARISM AS A CONCEPT

- Secularism can be seen as a doctrinal opposition to religious hegemony, religious tyranny, and religious and religion-based exclusion.
- Secularism aims to ensure that the social and political order is free from institutionalised religious domination so that there is religious freedom, freedom to exit from religion, inter-religious equality and equality between believers and non-believers.

Constitutional provision relating to secularism:

- **Preamble:** The Preamble to Indian Constitution declares India as a secular democratic republic.

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- **Article 15:** It prohibits the state from discriminating between citizens on the ground of religion.
- **Article 16:** Prohibits State from discriminating between citizens in the matter of public employment on the basis of religion.
- **Article 25:** Ensures freedom of conscience, free profession, practice, and propagation of religion.
- **Article 27:** No individual can be compelled by the government to pay taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
- **Article 28:** No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.
- **Article 29:** Protection of interests of minorities.
 - Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script, or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
 - No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on **grounds only of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them.**
- **Article 30:** Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
 - All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
 - The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.
- **Article 325:** No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special, electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste, or sex.

COMPARISON BETWEEN WESTERN MODEL OF SECULARISM AND INDIAN NOTION OF SECULARISM

Western model of secularism	Indian model of secularism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete separation between religion and State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not complete separation but giving equality and respect to all religions, i.e. principled distance model.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual rights are kept at the center stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective rights are also given due diligence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No open display of religion except for religious institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers can freely practise religion and are supported by the State.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State does not provide monetary aid to educational institutes that are run by religious societies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State contributes to religious denominations and helps them form and maintain their institutes for education with financial aid from the State.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No provisions for State supported religious reforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State has actively contributed to religious reforms such as abolition of untouchability and child marriage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single Uniform Civil code is present to deal with civil laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No presence of Uniform code, prevalence of personal laws.

ROLE OF INDIAN JUDICIARY IN SHAPING THE SECULARISM

As per judicial understanding, the word secular is not static; instead, it is dynamic. There cannot be any fixed view on this concept for all time. Thus, from time to time, the Court gives the different meaning of secularism and enforces it in practice.

- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973):** The Supreme Court held that *secularism was a part of the basic structure of the Constitution*.
 - **Chief Justice Sikri** said that the secular character of the Constitution was the essence of it.
 - Justice Shelat and Justice Grover stated that the secular and federal nature of the Constitution were the **main ingredients of the basic structure**.
 - Justice Jaganmohan Reddy stated that, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, **faith, and worship** could not be amended at any cost because they were part of the basic features of the Constitution.
- **Bommai v Union of India (1994):** In SR Bommai case, SC elaborated the meaning of secularism. The Court said that secularism means **equal treatment of all religions**.

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- The Court held that the word 'secular' which was inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment, highlights the **fundamental rights guaranteed in Articles 25-28**.
- The Court also said that the **neutrality of the State** would be violated **if religion is used for political purposes** and any political party is using religion to achieve a political goal. Religion and politics should not be mixed.
- **Ismail Faruqui v Union of India (1994)**: Although a secular State does not interfere in religious matters, it does not mean that the State has no say in all matters of religion. The State can make a law to regulate secular affairs of religious places.
 - The Court held that any property belonging to a religious community could be acquired by the State under the eminent domain.
- **Triple Talaq judgement**: While religious rights are important, they are subject to other rights in Part III, particularly Article 14 i.e. equal protection of law.

CHALLENGES TO INDIAN SECULARISM:

- **Identity Politics**: Politicians usually resort to identity politics, leveraging religious identities to consolidate vote banks. This leads to the marginalisation of minority communities and a dilution of secular values.
- **Religious Extremism**: Instances of religious extremism and fundamentalism pose a threat to secularism. Radical ideologies seeking to establish a theocratic state undermine the principles of a secular democracy, while further polarising society.
- **Lack of secularisation**: In India, secularism has been State centric, the need is secularisation of society before taking up secularism as a declared State value.
- **Global impact**: Secular values have come under pressure globally as well, global events like War on Terror has manifested itself as war on religious fundamentalism.
- **Low development of minorities**: According to the Sachar Committee, minorities in general and Muslim community in particular fare even below the SCs and STs in the socio-economic development matrix. This is despite the avowed commitment to secular policies in India.
- **Election and first-past the post system**: Reducing minorities to vote banks and saffronisation of politics.
- **Lack of effective checks to prevent communal riots and protection of religious shrines**: Studies have

shown that even the administration and police departments play partisan role in the times of communal clashes.

WAY FORWARD

- **Sachar Committee on development of minorities**: Following recommendations of Sachar committee can be implemented.
 - Set up an **Equal Opportunity Commission** to investigate grievances of deprived groups like minorities.
 - Create a **nomination procedure** to increase participation of minorities in public bodies.
 - Establish a delimitation procedure that does not reserve constituencies with high minority populations for SCs.
 - Increase employment share of Muslims, particularly where there is a great deal of public dealing. Work out mechanisms to link madrasas with higher secondary school boards.
- **RPA and Model Code of Conduct**: Effective enforcement of RPA and Model Code of Conduct during elections which bars flaring of communal tensions during elections.
- **Secular values in education**: Introduction of values and benefits of secularism in the school curriculum to enable students to appreciate secular values and leading to effective secularisation.
- **National Integration Council**: Mechanisms such as the National Integration Council should be operationalized, and frequent meetings should be conducted.
- **Strengthening National Commission for Minorities**: NCM should be strengthened to give Minorities a sense of security and safeguard their rights.

BOMBAY HC STRIKES DOWN CENTRE'S FACT CHECK UNIT

#GOVERNANCE

PRIMARY SOURCE The Indian EXPRESS

*The Bombay High Court struck down as unconstitutional a key provision of the amended **Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021** which empowered the government to identify "fake news" on social media platforms through a "Fact Check*

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Unit” (FCU). There is an option of an appeal before the Supreme Court, given that similar issues are pending before the Delhi and Madras HCs too.

FCU AN ARBITER IN ITS OWN CAUSE: JUDGE

➤ Rules introduced by amending IT Act permits **Fact Check Unit (FCU) to flag as ‘false, fake, or misleading’ content on social media/online about business of govt**

➤ In this case, as **central govt itself is aggrieved by ‘fake, false and misleading’ news**, FCU will be an arbiter in govt’s own cause, judge observes

Timeline **Apr 10, 2023** | Standup comic Kunal Kamra files petition challenging FCU

Jan 31, 2024 | **Split verdict** by Bombay HC 2-judge bench. **Justice Gautam Patel strikes it down, Justice Neela Gokhale upholds it**

Feb | **Justice A S Chandurkar** listed as **third judge**. Declines to stay FCU rule

Mar 21 | SC stays FCU rule

Sept 20 | HC holds **FCU rule to be unconstitutional and against fundamental rights of freedom of speech, equality, and trade**



“ Since the amended Rule attempts to identify ‘information’ (on) business of the central govt as fake or false or misleading by the FCU, it is necessary the said expressions are either defined or explained to give an idea of what could be termed to be fake or false or misleading

THE LAW IN QUESTION

- In 2023, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) promulgated the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 (2023 Rules)**, which amended the Information Technology Rules, 2021.
 - The amendment allows the government to constitute a **Fact Checking Unit (FCU)** under IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code), Amendment 2023.
 - The amendment to Rule 3(1)(b)(v) of the IT Rules, 2021 expanded the general term “fake news” to include **“government business”**. Under the Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any posts that are “fake”, “false”, or contain “misleading” facts pertaining to the **business of the government**, it would flag it to the social media intermediaries concerned.
- The **online intermediaries** would then have to **take down such content** if they wanted to retain their **“safe harbour” protection under the IT Rules, 2000**, that is, legal immunity with regard to third-party content published by them.
- Concerns:** The Rules raised **concerns over free speech** and the extent to which the **government can regulate it**. The FCUs allowed the government to be the “only arbiter” of truth in respect of business concerning itself.

NEED FOR CREATION OF FACT CHECK UNIT (FCU)

- The Fact Check Unit has a stated objective of **acting as a deterrent** to creators and disseminators of fake news and misinformation.
- It also provides people with an **easy avenue to report suspicious and questionable information** pertaining to the Government of India.
- The FCU is **mandated to counter misinformation on Government policies**, initiatives, and schemes either Suo motu or under a reference via complaints.
- The **FCU will actively monitor, detect, and counter disinformation campaigns**, ensuring that false information about the Government is promptly exposed and corrected.

POWERS OF FCU

- The body will have the authority to label content related to the government on online platforms like Facebook and Twitter as “fake” or “misleading”.
- Content flagged by the unit will have to be taken down** if they wish to retain their ‘safe harbour,’ which is legal immunity they enjoy against third-party content.
- Social media sites will have to take down such posts, and internet service providers will have to block URLs of such content.

LEGAL TEETH FOR FACT-CHECK UNIT UNDER PIB

A FACT-CHECKING UNIT has been in existence in the Press Information Bureau (PIB) under the Ministry of I&B since November 2019.

THE IT Amendment Rules 2023 introduced a “Fact Check Unit” (FCU) under the PIB as a legal mechanism to fact-check online content pertaining to “any business of the Central Government”.

THE FCU was notified on March 20, but was stayed by the Supreme Court until the Bombay High Court arrived at a final decision in the present case.

THE NOTIFICATION was intended to give the FCU legal status and teeth, and impose a legal obligation on online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to take down any content that the FCU branded as “fake”.

EXISTING UNIT has so far “fact-checked” thousands of WhatsApp forwards, YouTube videos, and newspaper and digital media articles. Then I&B Minister Anurag Thakur told Rajya Sabha in July 2023 that the FCU took action in 28,380 instances involving “fake news” on digital platforms between November 2020 and June 2023.

SUCH CONTENT is prominently stamped as “fake”, and the decision is publicised through the unit’s social media handles — @PIBFactCheck on X, /PIBFactCheck on Instagram and Facebook, etc.

HOWEVER, BEYOND such branding, the PIB’s fact-checking unit cannot do much. The proposed FCU is intended to change this situation.

DIVYA A

ISSUES WITH THE IT AMENDMENT 2023

Stand-up comic Kunal Kamra, the Editors’ Guild of India, the News Broadcasters & Digital Association, and the Association of Indian Magazines challenged the constitutional validity of the Rules, terming them **arbitrary, unconstitutional, and in violation of fundamental rights**.

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- **Violation of IT Act 2000:** The fact check unit, notified by the Executive, could effectively issue a takedown order to social media platforms and even other intermediaries across the internet stack, potentially bypassing the process statutorily prescribed under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000. In addition to circumventing the parliamentary procedures required to expand the scope of the parent legislation, i.e., the IT Act.
- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** The amended Rule 3(1)(b)(v) was violative of Articles 14 (equality before law), 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) and 19(1)(g) (right to practise a profession or trade) of the Constitution. The Rule **curtailed the fundamental rights of citizens beyond the reasonable restrictions** prescribed under Article 19(2), which was "impermissible through the mode of delegated legislation".
- **Vague definitions:** Under the Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any posts that are "fake", "false", or contain "misleading" facts pertaining to the business **of the government**, it would flag it to the social media intermediaries concerned. The expressions "fake, false or misleading" in the Rule are "vague and overbroad".
- **Against the principle of Natural Justice:** The FCU has a unilateral view of what is or is not the 'truth', and makes the government the sole arbiter. Assigning **any unit of the government such arbitrary, overbroad powers to determine the authenticity of online content** bypasses the principles of natural justice, thus making it an unconstitutional exercise. The Centre's claim that decisions given by the FCU can be challenged before a constitutional court "cannot be treated as adequate safeguard", and therefore, the Rule cannot be saved by reading it down or making a concession of limiting its operation.
- **Fails the proportionality test:** The Rule resulted in a "chilling effect" on the intermediary due to the "threat of losing safe harbour", and also on the freedom of speech. These notified amendments in 2023 were also in gross violation of the Hon'ble Supreme Court ruling in Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India (2013) which laid down strict procedures for blocking content.

SHREYA SINGHAL VS. UNION OF INDIA, 2015

The Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India case is a landmark judgement by the Supreme Court of India that dealt with the constitutionality of certain provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

The key points of the ruling are:

- **Section 66A of the IT Act:** The Court declared Section 66A, which criminalised the transmission of "offensive" or "menacing" content, to be **unconstitutional** on the grounds that it infringed upon the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.
- **Overbreadth and Vagueness:** The Court found that Section 66A was overly broad and vague, as it did not provide clear and definite guidelines for what constitutes "offensive" or "menacing" content. This ambiguity could lead to arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement.
- **Chill Effect:** The Court also noted that Section 66A had a **chilling effect on freedom of expression**, as people were afraid to express their opinions online for fear of being prosecuted.

CONCLUSION: Right of citizens to participate in the representative and participatory democracy of the country is meaningless unless they have access to authentic information and are not misled by misinformation. In the Shreya Singhal Case, the Supreme Court has emphasised the need to **strike a balance between the right to free speech and the need to regulate online content**. While the government has a legitimate interest in preventing the spread of harmful content, such regulations must be reasonable and proportionate to the legitimate aim sought to be achieved.

LEGAL VALIDITY OF DECEPTION DETECTION TESTS

#CRIMINAL JUSTICE #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The CBI has obtained permission to conduct **polygraph test** in the ongoing investigation of RG Kar Medical College rape case.*

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ABOUT DECEPTION DETECTION TESTS: Deception detection tests (DDTs) are scientific procedures employed to detect probable deception during interrogation. These tests include narco-analysis, polygraph tests, and brain mapping.

- **Polygraph Test:** This test measures physiological responses believed to be associated with lying, such as blood pressure, galvanic skin response (sweating), breathing rate, and pulse rate. Instruments like cardio-cuffs or electrodes are attached to the subject, and as questions are posed, these physiological responses are monitored to detect possible deception.
- **Narco-Analysis:** This test involves the administration of a drug, typically **sodium pentothal**, which puts the subject into a hypnotic or sedated state. The assumption is that in this state, the subject's ability to lie is weakened, making them more likely to reveal truthful information. The drug is sometimes referred to as a "truth serum."
- **Brain Mapping:** This test measures the subject's neural activity, specifically brainwaves, by attaching electrodes to the face and neck. It operates on the principle that the brain generates distinctive brainwaves when exposed to familiar stimuli (such as images or sounds), which can indicate recognition and potentially reveal deception.

LEADING CASES IN THIS REGARD

- **Rojo George vs. Deputy Superintendent of Police (2006):** The court ruled that the use of scientific tests like polygraphs **was essential for effective investigations**, given the sophistication of modern crimes. The court also stated that conducting such tests under expert supervision did not violate fundamental rights, thereby supporting their use even without the accused's consent.
- **Dinesh Dalmia vs. State (2006):** The court held that the use of lie detection tests **did not amount to "testimonial compulsion" and could be a safer alternative to custodial violence**. This case reinforced the view that these tests were useful tools in criminal investigations.
- **Sh. Shailender Sharma vs. State & Another (2008):** The court allowed the administration of narco-analysis tests, arguing that they **did not suffer from constitutional infirmity**. The decision emphasized balancing the need for thorough investigation with the protection of individual rights.
- **Selvi vs. State of Karnataka (2010):** This is the most significant case regarding DDTs in India. The Supreme Court ruled that no lie detection tests (including polygraph, narco-analysis, and brain mapping) could be conducted **without the accused's consent**. Forcing an individual to undergo such tests violated their **fundamental rights against self-incrimination (Article 20(3))** and their **right to privacy (Article 21)**. The court also mandated that **voluntary consent must be obtained in the presence of a judicial magistrate** and that the accused should have access to legal counsel.
 - **Nandini Satpathy vs. P.L. Dani (1978):** This case is often cited in discussions about the right against self-incrimination. The Supreme Court ruled that **no person could be compelled to answer questions that would incriminate themselves, reinforcing the protections under Article 20(3)**.

ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THE USE OF DDTs

- **Doubtful Efficacy:** Deception detection tests (DDTs) like polygraph tests, narco-analysis, and brain mapping are scientifically contentious. Studies have shown that these tests may not reliably detect deception, with issues like high false-positive rates and the possibility of individuals training to beat them.
- **Legal Concerns:** Before 2010, Indian courts largely supported these tests, even allowing them without the accused's consent. However, the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in **Selvi vs. State of Karnataka** marked a significant shift, emphasising the need for the accused's consent, citing the fundamental right against self-incrimination under **Article 20(3) and the right to privacy under Article 21**.
- **Use of Test Results in Court:** The Supreme Court ruled that while test results cannot be considered confessions, **information discovered as a result of these tests could be admissible**. However, there are stringent requirements like the need for voluntary consent recorded before a judicial magistrate and access to legal counsel during the course of the test.
- Despite legal safeguards, these tests continue to be used in India, often in high-profile cases. Critics argue that true informed consent is difficult to obtain, particularly in police custody, and that these tests can be misused to extract false confessions.

S.C. GRANTS BAIL TO KEJRIWAL

#LAWS AND CONSTITUTION

PRIMARY
SOURCE The Indian
EXPRESS

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been granted bail in the CBI case registered with respect to excise policy. Furthermore, the court also remarked that the accused has the right to remain silent and right against self-incrimination as enshrined in Article 20(3) of the Indian Constitution.

CONCEPT OF BAIL: Bail refers to the temporary release of an accused person awaiting trial, on the condition that they appear in court when required. It is based on the principle of personal liberty and ensures that an accused individual does not have to remain in custody while the trial is ongoing unless necessary. The right to bail is governed by various provisions of the Constitution of India and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL RATIONALITY BEHIND THE PRINCIPLE OF BAIL

- Idea of bail is embedded in the bedrock of Article 21 of the Constitution which safeguards life and liberty by commanding that liberty can be deprived only through the procedure established by law, which must be "just, fair and reasonable".
- Chapter XXXIII Section 436 to 439 of CrPC deal with the Concept of bail.
- Furthermore, Section 167 of the CrPC which is generally termed as "Default Bail" is also there in case the investigation is not completed within 90 days or sixty days depending on the severity of the offence.

TYPES OF BAIL

- Regular Bail (Section 437 and 439 of CrPC):**
 - This is granted after arrest and custody.
 - The accused can apply for bail in a court where the trial is being conducted or in a higher court.
- Anticipatory Bail (Section 438 of CrPC):**
 - Granted when an individual apprehends arrest for a non-bailable offence.
 - It allows a person to seek bail even before being arrested, providing protection from detention.
- Default bail:** A right to bail that accrues when the police fail to complete investigation within a specified

period (60/90 days depending on the crime) in respect of a person in judicial custody.

CONDITIONS FOR GRANTING BAIL: Various conditions are kept in mind by the court while granting the bail, for example,

- The **severity of the offence**.
- The accused's **criminal record**.
- The risk of the accused **fleeing** or **tampering with evidence**.
- The **well-being** of the accused, such as health or age.

However, the applicant has to ensure that.

- The person shall make himself available for the interrogation by a police officer as and when required.
- That the person shall not directly or indirectly make any inducement, threats or promise to any witness.
- That a person shall not leave India without previous permission of the Court.
- Any other precondition requested by the prosecution and agreed upon by the court.
- Any other condition set upon by the court.

The idea of bail is a noble idea in criminal jurisprudence, the idea of bail conveys the meaning that the accused **cannot be presumed to be guilty until his guilt is proved**. Provision of bail also brings the noble idea of **personal liberty into existence**.

FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

#CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

Attorney General of India has recently remarked that effectuation of Fundamental Duties is a continuous task in response to a plea filed to enact well defined laws/rules to ensure adherence to the fundamental Duties enshrined in Article 51 A of the Constitution.

ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

It is understood that the rights are correlative with duties. Yet the Original Constitution of India did not contain Fundamental Duties, these were added by the 42nd constitutional amendment. Fundamental Duties are a **set of moral and ethical obligations** that citizens are expected to uphold towards a nation.

LIST OF FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

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- a. to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem.
- b. to cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired the national struggle for freedom.
- c. to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.
- d. to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so.
- e. to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- f. to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.
- g. to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.
- h. to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- i. to safeguard public property and to abjure violence.
- j. to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement; and

- k. to provide opportunities for education to his/her child or ward between the age of six and fourteen years. This duty was added by the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

- Some of them are **moral duties while others are civic duties**, for instance, cherishing noble ideals of freedom struggle is a moral precept and respecting the Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem is a civic duty.
- They refer to such values which have been a part of the Indian tradition, mythology, religions, and practices. In other words, they essentially contain just a codification of tasks integral to the Indian way of life.
- Unlike some of the Fundamental Rights which extend to all persons whether citizens or foreigners, the **Fundamental Duties are confined to citizens only and do not extend to foreigners.**
- Like the Directive Principles, the fundamental duties are also non-justiciable. The Constitution does not provide for their direct enforcement by the courts. Moreover, there is no legal sanction against their violation. However, the Parliament is free to enforce them by suitable legislation.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Which of the following statements is incorrect with respect to Constitutionalism in India?

- (a) Constitutionalism ensures that the state's powers are limited by the Constitution.
- (b) The existence of Fundamental Rights is a key feature of Constitutionalism.
- (c) Constitutionalism allows unrestricted exercise of state power to maintain order and stability.
- (d) Separation of powers among different state organs is crucial for Constitutionalism.

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Fundamental Duties in the Indian Constitution:

- 1. Fundamental Duties are confined to citizens only and do not extend to foreigners.
- 2. The Constitutional Provision regarding Fundamental Duties has never been amended.
- 3. All Fundamental Duties are justiciable, and courts can enforce them directly.
- 4. They include both moral and civic duties.

How many of the Statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two

CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- (c) Only three (d) All four
- Q3. The Article of Indian Constitution which acts as the bedrock behind the concept of bail in the Indian legal system is.**
- (a) Article 14 (b) Article 19
(c) Article 21 (d) Article 32
- Q4. What is the present position of use of Deception Detection Tests (DDTs) in the Indian legal system?**
- (a) DDTs can be administered without the consent of the accused to aid criminal investigations.
(b) DDTs violate the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.
(c) DDTs can only be conducted with the voluntary consent of the accused, ensuring protection under Article 20(3) and Article 21 of the Constitution.
(d) The Court has allowed the use of DDTs as evidence in court if they are conducted under judicial supervision.

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** Explain how Article 368 has ensured that the Indian constitution remains a living document to achieve Socio, Economic and Political Justice in India?
- Q2.** What is constitutionalism in the Indian Context? What are possible threats to the practice of the ideal of constitutionalism in India?

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II & III (MAIN)

'PACT OF THE FUTURE': STEP TOWARDS UN SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

#INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS #UNSC

#REFORMS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

India described the inclusion of a detailed paragraph on **Security Council reform in a U.N. summit document as a "good beginning."** New Delhi expressed its anticipation for the initiation of text-based negotiations within a fixed timeframe to address reforms of the 15-member body.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE NEWS ARTICLE

Historic moment:

- **September 22, 2024:** World leaders unanimously adopted the '**Pact of the Future**', marking a significant milestone in the long-awaited reform of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.

- The pact promises to enhance the council's *representativeness, inclusivity, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, democracy, and accountability*.
- **Importance of the pact's language:**
 - It includes a detailed paragraph on UNSC reform for the **first time in a U.N. summit document**. While the pact may not encompass every detail desired, it is a 'good beginning.'
 - There is optimism for the **initiation of text-based negotiations within a defined timeframe**, viewing the current agreement as a foundational step toward meaningful reform.
 - The 'Pact of the Future' also underscores the commitment to address **historical injustices faced by Africa, recognizing it as a special case**.
 - Leaders agreed to improve **representation for underrepresented regions, including the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean**.
 - The pact emphasises the necessity of **enlarging the Security Council to better reflect the contemporary realities of its membership**.
 - The pact advocates for intensified efforts to secure an **agreement on the categories of Security Council membership**.
 - It encourages the **submission and revision of proposals by states** for structured dialogues aimed at developing a consolidated model. This emphasis on a **collaborative approach** aims to balance the council's representativeness with its effectiveness.
- **India's stance on UNSC Reform:**
 - India has been a prominent advocate for UNSC reform, arguing that the **current structure is not suited for the challenges of the 21st century**.

- India rightfully claims a permanent seat on the Security Council, as **India has served as a non-permanent member in 2021-22.**
- The country's position reflects its commitment to a more equitable international order, particularly in light of the ***Security Council's polarisation on pressing global issues like the Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Hamas situation.***
- In his address at the '**Summit of the Future**', Prime Minister Modi stressed that institutional reforms are crucial for global peace and development. The reform is essential for maintaining the relevance of international institutions.
- **Need for Institutional reforms:**
 - U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres echoed this sentiment, calling for profound reforms to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of global institutions, rooted in the principles of the UN Charter.
 - He emphasised that the challenges of the 21st century necessitate contemporary solutions that are inclusive and collaborative.



- He noted the **disparity between the original 51 member states at the UN's inception nearly 80 years ago and the current 193 members**, highlighting the outdated nature of existing peace and security frameworks.
- He warned that the Security Council, characterised as '**outdated,**' risks losing

credibility unless its composition and methods are reformed.

The evolving dynamics of international relations necessitate significant reforms to address its inherent limitations. Some of the reasons why reforms are needed in UNSC are:

1. Outdated representation:

- The current structure of the UNSC fails to adequately represent the global landscape.
- **Lack of representation from Africa and Latin America:** With 54 countries, Africa remains vastly underrepresented in the UNSC, as does Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite their growing influence on the world stage, these regions have no permanent representation.
- Major economies in Latin America and the significant population and resources of Africa highlight the **disconnect between the UNSC's membership and the realities of global power dynamics.**

2. Concerns over Sovereignty and Unilateral actions:

- Sanctions imposed by the UNSC can lead to severe economic repercussions for nations, often disregarding the interests of those nations.
- **Key decisions, particularly regarding conflicts in regions like Africa,** are made without adequate representation from those directly affected.
- **Sanctions on Iran** have led to a crippling economic crisis, highlighting how the UNSC's actions can have far-reaching effects on a nation's sovereignty and well-being.

3. Lack of recognition for major contributors:

- Countries that play pivotal roles in global peacekeeping and financing are overlooked in the UNSC.
- **India, Japan, and Germany:** These nations are significant contributors to UN peacekeeping missions and UN finances but lack permanent seats in the UNSC.
- **India is among the top contributors to peacekeeping operations,** while Japan and Germany are major financial backers of the UN. Their exclusion from the UNSC reflects an imbalance that undermines their contributions.

4. Ineffectiveness of Veto power:

- The veto power held by the P5 (the five permanent members) has often led to deadlocks in critical situations.

- **Deadlocks:** The veto can obstruct consensus and render the UNSC ineffective in times of crisis.
- The use of Veto power by the P5 nations to protect their interests illustrate how the P-5 can skew resolutions in their favour, disregarding broader international concerns.
- The P5's inability to agree on resolutions regarding the Syrian Civil War has resulted in prolonged inaction, exacerbating human suffering and instability.

5. Discouragement of multilateralism:

- The exclusivity and perceived ineffectiveness of the UNSC have eroded trust in multilateralism.
- The UNSC's failures discourage countries from engaging in collective efforts to tackle global challenges, undermining international cooperation.

6. Changing geopolitics:

- The geopolitical landscape has shifted significantly since the establishment of the UNSC.
- **Post-World War II composition:** The current UNSC composition reflects a bi-polar world that no longer exists, failing to represent the multi-polar reality of today where developing nations have substantial influence.
- This misalignment hampers effective decision-making and inclusivity.

The UN chief cautioned the 15-member United Nations Security Council about its outdated nature, highlighting that its waning authority could ultimately lead to a complete loss of credibility unless significant reforms are enacted in both its composition and operational methods. The UN chief issued a powerful call to action, stating, *"We cannot forge a future for our grandchildren with a system designed for our grandparents."*

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE, 2024

World leaders convened at the **Summit of the Future (New York)** adopted the **Pact for the Future**, which includes a **Global Digital Compact** and a **Declaration on Future Generations**.

1.Commitment to Sustainable development:

- Member States recommitted to accelerating the implementation of the **2030 Agenda** and the **2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration**.

- Their aim is to eradicate poverty and hunger while ensuring no one is left behind.
- The Pact emphasises the necessity of planning for sustainable development beyond 2030 and addresses the SDG financing gap through enhanced public and private investments.

2.Climate action and Environmental sustainability:

- The Pact reiterates the commitment to **limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels** and transition from fossil fuels to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
- It also calls for urgent actions to promote sustainable practices, including a legally-binding agreement on plastic pollution and initiatives to reverse biodiversity loss.

3.Peace and security initiatives:

- Leaders emphasised the importance of sustaining peace through national prevention strategies, strengthening international cooperation, and ensuring military spending does not undermine sustainable development.
- The Pact commits to **protecting civilians in conflict zones and enhancing accountability** for serious violations of international law.

4.Disarmament and arms control:

- One of the Pact's notable achievements is the reaffirmation of commitment to nuclear disarmament, alongside measures to prevent the weaponization of emerging technologies, **including artificial intelligence**.

5.Addressing global inequalities in Science and Technology:

- The Pact promotes reducing disparities in science, technology, and innovation (STI) and emphasises women's and girls' participation in these fields.
- It advocates for increased funding for SDG-related research and innovation.

6.Enhancing Multilateral cooperation:

- The adoption of the Pact showcases countries' commitment to an international system centred around the United Nations.
- It aims to **enhance multilateralism** to better reflect contemporary global dynamics, fostering

collaboration among governments, civil society, and private sectors.

7. Youth and gender equality:

- The Pact prioritises youth engagement in global decision-making and commits to revitalising **the Commission on the Status of Women**, ensuring the empowerment of women and girls.

8. Financial architecture reform:

- The Pact outlines comprehensive reforms to the international financial architecture, aiming for more **equitable representation of developing countries and improved financial safety nets** to support economic resilience.

9. Global Digital compact and future generations declaration:

- Annexed to the Pact, the **Global Digital Compact** establishes a framework for digital cooperation that emphasises **human rights and accountability in the digital space**.
- The **Declaration on Future Generations** focuses on safeguarding the interests of future populations through long-term governance principles.

10. Outer Space:

- On governing outer space, the Pact includes an agreement to strengthen the existing international frameworks including to ensure that **all countries can benefit from its safe and sustainable exploration and use**, and **working with non-State actors where relevant**.

The Pact includes follow-up mechanisms, including a high-level review of the Global Digital Compact in 2027 and a comprehensive review of the Pact for the Future in 2028.

STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC TIES AND EMPHASISING REGIONAL STABILITY

- The PM's visit marked the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei, although former PM Manmohan Singh visited in 2013 for the ASEAN-India summit.
- The visit underscored **Brunei's strategic importance, located at the centre of the ASEAN region** and surrounded by key Southeast Asian countries.
- During bilateral talks between India and Brunei, both countries **renewed a cooperation agreement in space, with Brunei continuing to host the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Telemetry Tracking and Command station**.
- The discussions also covered enhancing defence cooperation and exploring long-term partnerships in **LNG supplies, as India has shifted its oil imports from Brunei to Russian sources in recent years**.
- **The China factor:**
 - While Brunei has historically maintained close defence ties with the United States due to its strategic location, in recent decades, **China has become Brunei's largest trading partner and investor, particularly in Belt and Road Initiative projects**.
 - Bilateral trade between China and Brunei amounts to \$2.6 billion.
 - **In contrast, India-Brunei trade was valued at approximately \$286.20 million in 2023.**
- PM Modi's comments also reflected Brunei's growing unease over Chinese aggression and territorial claims in the South China Sea. **He called for giving a 'strategic direction' to the India-Brunei partnership**, focusing on strengthening defence cooperation, including defence industry partnerships, training, and capacity building.
- The **plans for direct flights between India and Brunei**, enhancing bilateral connectivity and ties were also announced.

CALL FOR REGIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

- PM Modi called for the finalisation of a **'Code of Conduct' for the Indo-Pacific, addressing issues of sovereignty and maritime violations**.

INDIA AND BRUNEI

#ACT EAST POLICY #INDO-PACIFIC

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

Secondary Source: 'Redressing the neglect in India-Brunei Relations-Article by Dr Mustafa Izzuddin'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, emphasized India's stance on 'development, not expansionism,' in comments seen as directed at China's actions in the South China Sea and Indo-Pacific. He made these remarks at an event hosted by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah in Bandar Seri Begawan.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

- The joint statement from both countries urged all parties to **resolve disputes peacefully in line with international law, specifically referencing the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982**, under which **Brunei is a claimant state in the South China Sea** alongside China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.



BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

- Location:** on the northern coast of Borneo in Southeast Asia, bordered by the South China Sea to the north and **surrounded entirely by the Malaysian state of Sarawak**.
- Only sovereign state on the island of Borneo, the rest of which is shared by Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Capital:** Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Official language:** Malay
- Brunei's economic wealth is driven by its significant petroleum and natural gas reserves, which helped transform it into an industrialized nation. Crude oil and natural gas production account for about 90% of its GDP.
- Brunei ranks 'very high' on the Human Development Index (HDI), second only to Singapore among Southeast Asian countries.
- Brunei is also a member of various international organizations, including ASEAN, East Asia Summit and Non-Aligned Movement.

INDIA-BRUNEI BILATERAL RELATIONS

Political:

- India and Brunei Darussalam established formal diplomatic relations in **1984, soon after Brunei gained full independence**.

- Initially, India's diplomatic presence in Brunei was managed by its High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. **This changed in 1993, when India set up its own High Commission in Brunei.**
- Brunei opened its resident High Commission in India in 1992.
- India and Brunei share strong political and cultural relations, underscored by **their common membership in international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth, and ASEAN.**
- Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei has been a strong advocate for closer ties with India and has supported the welfare of the Indian community in Brunei.
- The Brunei government has also been **supportive of India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies** aimed at deepening engagement with ASEAN nations.
- As the **Country Coordinator for India in ASEAN from July 2012 to June 2015**, Brunei played a significant role in strengthening India's partnership with ASEAN.
- Additionally, Brunei has been generally supportive of India's candidature in various international organisations.

STRATEGIC RELATIONS

- In 2021, India and Brunei renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation** for another five years, reinforcing their commitment to deepen bilateral defence ties.
 - The agreement facilitates regular official-level exchanges, joint training exercises, and participation in defence exhibitions and events hosted by both countries.
- The defence cooperation between India and Brunei has been marked by **regular naval visits and joint exercises**.
 - Indian naval ships have frequently visited Brunei, with their officers participating in regional events like Milan and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).
- Several high-level delegations** from both countries have visited to strengthen defence ties.
 - Indian Delegations:** In 2017, a 16-member delegation from the National Defence College (NDC) visited Brunei.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

- **Bruneian Delegations:** Pehin Haji Awang Abu Bakar, Minister of Home Affairs, attended the First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in 2016.
- A significant component of India-Brunei strategic cooperation is the agreement signed in August 1997 for the **establishment of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Telemetry, Tracking, and Command (TTC) Station in Brunei, operational since 2000.**
 - This station has played a crucial role in supporting over 35 ISRO missions.
 - The latest MoU related to this initiative was signed in July 2018, ensuring continued collaboration in satellite tracking.
- **Significance of strategic relation for India:**
 - Brunei plays pivotal roles in India's broader Indo-Pacific vision.
 - India has significant interests in the South China Sea, with approximately 55% of its trade transiting through these contested waters.
 - China's growing economic influence allows it to fund various regional projects and extend loans, **but China's assertive actions in the South China Sea have generated regional tensions.**
 - **India, with the support of partners like Brunei, can offer a counterbalance to China's regional dominance** and bolster stability in the Indo-Pacific.
 - India also aims to **leverage Brunei's potential as part of its China+1 strategy.**
 - **The 'China+1' strategy** is employed by businesses and nations that have relied extensively on China for manufacturing and supply chain needs.
 - This approach focuses on **diversifying operations by setting up manufacturing facilities or sourcing from additional countries beyond China**, thereby reducing dependency and mitigating risks associated with over-reliance on a single market.
- **India's main exports** to Brunei include automobiles, transport equipment, rice, and spices.
- **In turn, crude oil remains the primary import from Brunei to India.** As of 2023, India's exports to Brunei amounted to \$128.2 million, while imports reached \$67 million.
- Both countries have actively participated in numerous trade fairs, exhibitions, and virtual meetings aimed at fostering bilateral trade. **A notable development was the first Joint Trade Committee meeting held in 2018**, which aimed to enhance trade relations between the two nations.
- **The Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India (EEPC)** also organised a virtual session with Brunei as part of the India-ASEAN Engineering Partnership Summit in August 2021.
- **India has extended capacity-building assistance to Brunei** under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, offering two slots annually.
- **The collaboration between the two countries also extends to digital solutions and IT sectors.** Activ8 BN Digital Solutions, a Bruneian IT company, participated in the Software EPC event held in October 2021, highlighting the potential for growth in technology-driven commercial relations between India and Brunei.

INDIAN DIASPORA

- The Indian presence in Brunei dates back to the discovery of oil in 1929, which brought many Indians to work in the hydrocarbon sector and related services.
- Today, the Indian community in Brunei numbers approximately 14,000, with a significant majority hailing from Tamil Nadu (over 40%).
- **The Brunei-India Friendship Association (BIFA), established in 2009, and the Indian Overseas Professionals Network (IPON), launched in December 2021,** further enhance community cohesion and professional networking among Indian expatriates in Brunei.
- The Indian diaspora in Brunei is diverse, with a significant number of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, lab technicians, and paramedics, as well as teachers, engineers, IT professionals, and other skilled workers

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

- India and Brunei have maintained strong commercial ties, with a diverse range of exports and imports forming the core of their trade relationship.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, established in Brunei in July 1972, currently represents over 100 Indian business establishments.
- **Humanitarian contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic:**
 - In response to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, the Indian diaspora in Brunei contributed 1,050 cylinders filled with compressed medical oxygen as part of COVID relief efforts.

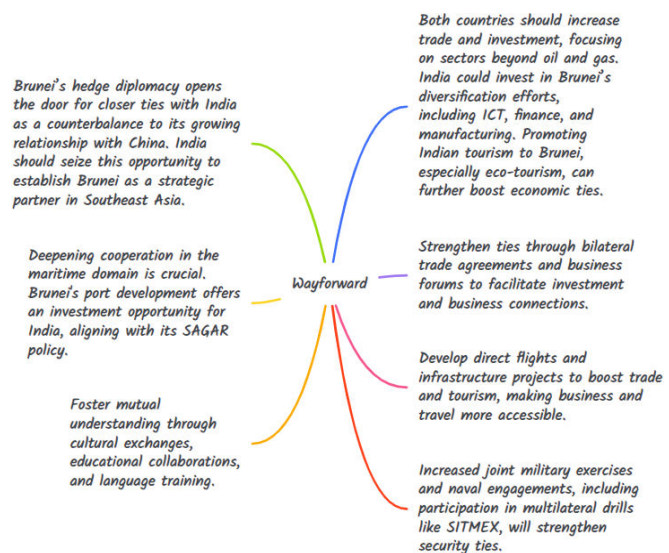
CHALLENGES

- **Historical neglect:** India and Brunei's bilateral relations have historically been limited, with minimal engagement during Narendra Modi's first term (2014-2019). Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's visit to India was rare, occurring only once to mark ASEAN-India dialogue relations.
- **Strategic misalignment:**
 - India's focus on expanding its presence in Southeast Asia through its Act East Policy contrasts with Brunei's regional security concerns and its balancing act in foreign policy.
 - Brunei maintains close defence relations with Western countries while fostering economic ties with China and its ASEAN maritime neighbours.
 - This divergence can complicate efforts to align their strategic goals.
- **Limited maritime and defence cooperation:** Despite some progress, including joint military exercises and a 2016 defence pact, India-Brunei defence cooperation remains limited due to Brunei's preference for Western military equipment and cautious approach to arms purchases from regional neighbours.
- **Economic underperformance:** India-Brunei trade is underdeveloped, with significant growth potential in sectors beyond oil and gas, like ICT, finance, and manufacturing. Limited trade agreements and business ventures restrict the potential for a more comprehensive economic partnership and growth.
- **Connectivity issues:** Limited direct connectivity between India and Brunei impacts business travel and tourism. This poor connectivity restricts people-to-people interactions and investment opportunities, making it difficult for businesses and tourists to engage fully.
- **Cultural and language barriers:** Cultural and language differences pose challenges to deeper

understanding and cooperation between the two countries. These barriers can affect diplomatic interactions and collaborative efforts across various sectors.

- **Political and economic uncertainty:**

- Brunei's current political stability and economic diversification efforts are key to its future growth.
- While Brunei seeks to reduce its reliance on oil and gas and attract foreign investment, India must demonstrate its reliability as an economic partner, especially after withdrawing from regional trade agreements like the RCEP.



*"India and Brunei stand poised for a significant strengthening of bilateral ties. **The current climate presents an ideal opportunity for both nations to elevate their relationship to a more prominent position within their respective foreign policies.** The leadership of Prime Minister Modi and the Sultan of Brunei will play a crucial role in revitalising this partnership, fostering deeper and more sustainable engagement."*

CHINA-AFRICA SUMMIT 2024

#INDIA-AFRICA #CHINESE INFLUENCE

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*With **African governments increasingly favouring engagement with China**, the recent Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) conference warrants a thorough and*

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objective examination. This shift in preference presents **notable implications for India**, highlighting key areas where India might need to recalibrate its strategies and policies.

CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

- Over the past 24 years, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has evolved into a comprehensive and effective platform for dialogue and collaboration between China and African nations.
- Despite various reservations and grievances, African countries have increasingly found value in strengthening their ties with China.
- In this context, the outcomes of the recent **Ninth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC, held in Beijing, warrant a detailed and objective analysis.**

EVOLUTION OF FOCAC

- During the latter half of the 20th century, particularly its final decade, China established a foundational partnership with Africa.
- **Established in 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** was created to formalize and enhance the strategic partnership between China and African nations.
- The forum operates on a **triennial summit basis**, with each summit alternating between China and an African member country as the host.
- **FOCAC includes 53 African nations**, with the *notable exception of Eswatini, which maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan, contrary to China's 'One China' Policy.*
- **Additionally, the African Union Commission, which oversees cooperation and economic integration among its member states, is an active participant in FOCAC.**
- The relationship between China and Africa has expanded significantly since the first FOCAC summit in Beijing in 2000.
- The forum has since convened **five times in Beijing and once each in Ethiopia, Egypt, South Africa, and Senegal.**
- The recent summit in **Beijing highlights China's unwavering and strategic commitment to its African partnerships**, underscoring the continent's importance in China's global vision.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION, 2024

1. **China-Africa community with a shared future:** The declaration envisions a strengthened partnership through a 'China-Africa Community with a Shared Future,' aligning China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. **Synergy with global initiatives:** The declaration highlights integrating China's Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) into the strategy with Africa, supporting Africa's role in global governance and advocating for UN reforms, including the Security Council.
3. **Economic cooperation and debt treatment:** China acknowledges progress in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and is ready to sign an economic partnership framework with Africa. It has also shifted responsibility for financing African projects and debt treatment to international financial institutions and commercial creditors.
4. **Flagship plans and support:** China's GDI, GSI, and GCI are integrated into a broader strategy for security and development. The declaration supports more UN funding for African peace operations and counterterrorism and emphasises cultural dialogue.
5. **Future conferences and leadership transition:** The summit ended with the Republic of the Congo taking over as FOCAC co-chair from Senegal and the next conference scheduled in Congo for 2027.

EVALUATING CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT

Despite the fanfare surrounding Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote address at the Beijing Summit, the underlying framework remains consistent with past patterns:

- **Recycled rhetoric:** President Xi's speech, though received with enthusiasm, followed a familiar pattern of past statements and strategies regarding Africa.
- **Debt and financing Offers:** Xi Jinping committed nearly \$51 billion in soft loans, grants, and investment incentives for Africa, continuing a trend of substantial financial pledges.
- **Consistent partnership agendas:** Xi outlined ten key actions on trade, green development, industrial cooperation, and health, mirroring previous initiatives.
- **Implementation challenges:** Announcements like 60,000 training opportunities and 1,000 invitations for

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

African political party members lack transparency, a recurring issue in past commitments.

- **Zero tariff initiative:** China's decision to offer zero-tariff treatment to all 33 least developed African countries for 100% of tariff lines could significantly boost African exports to China if effectively implemented.

CHINA IN AFRICA: ROLE OF TRADE, INVESTMENTS, AND LOANS AMIDST SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL AMBITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Modern diplomatic relations started in the early 20th century and expanded significantly during the Cold War, notably with projects like the Tanzam railway.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

- Until the late 1970s, China's economic ties with Africa were ideologically driven.
- Today, **China is Africa's largest trading partner and lender**, with over 1,000 Chinese companies operating on the continent.
- In 2019, China's trade with Africa reached USD 200 billion, making it Africa's top bilateral trade partner.
- **China absorbs about 11% of Africa's exports**, with countries like Angola, Congo, and Zambia particularly dependent on this trade.

INVESTMENTS

- **In 2019, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa was USD 44 billion, or 2% of global Chinese FDI.**
- This is significant but not disproportionate compared to Western investments.
- Key destinations include South Africa, the DRC, Angola, and Zambia, focusing on infrastructure and raw materials.
- Despite modest totals, Chinese construction projects in Africa generate substantial revenues, underscoring China's impact on infrastructure development.

AN ANALYSIS

- China's economic goals in Africa **include securing natural resources, creating markets for Chinese goods**, and ensuring stability to protect its interests.

- Although China's trade share is comparable to that of other major partners like France or the UK, it serves broader geopolitical aims.
- **China has built strong ties with resource-rich nations** such as Angola, Zambia, and the DRC, diversifying Africa's trade beyond traditional partners like the US and EU.
- While this has spurred economic growth and improved trade terms, challenges include rising global raw material prices affecting net importers and **the displacement of local industries by Chinese goods.**
- Chinese investment in infrastructure and resource extraction **meets Africa's investment needs but may also create dependencies.**
- Unlike Western investments, **Chinese FDI, often state-backed, focuses on long-term gains, leading to criticisms of 'neo-colonial' practices.**
- **Focus on lending:**
 - Chinese loans are now crucial in Africa, filling gaps left by limited private and international capital.
 - China is the largest bilateral lender to Africa, focusing on infrastructure, energy, and mining.
 - **These loans support major projects but also increase debt burdens, with Angola being the largest debtor.**
 - China's lending practices, often criticised for their lack of transparency, have sparked debates over their impact.
 - Critics claim these loans can lead to harsh terms and asset seizures in case of default, with concerns about **debt trap diplomacy due to confidentiality clauses and collateral requirements.**
 - Recent reductions in Chinese lending, from \$75 billion in 2016 to \$4 billion in 2019, indicate a shift toward more cautious practices, focusing on commercial viability over political influence.
 - As African debt rises, China will be key in debt relief discussions, favouring bilateral over multilateral frameworks like the Paris Club.

CHINA AS A POLITICAL FACTOR IN AFRICA

- China supports African nations through investments, debt cancellations, medical aid, and student exchanges.
- Beyond these commitments, China's political motives **include isolating Taiwan and shaping attitudes**

toward Hong Kong, reflecting broader geopolitical ambitions.

- There is debate over whether China aims to export its development model to Africa to influence political elites.
- Chinese political scientist Zhang Weiwei argues that China's development model, shaped by its unique historical and cultural factors, is non-transferable. **He cites factors such as China's large population and rich culture as 'super-factors' that make its model distinct.**
- **China's non-interference policy has faced criticism for potentially undermining the UN's 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) principle.**
- Critics argue that China's approach is pragmatic and self-serving, often aligning with its interests.
- China's diplomatic strategies include training for African leaders, vaccine diplomacy, and media influence.
- While many Africans view China positively, there have been **tensions due to incidents of racial discrimination and poor labour practices by Chinese businesses.**

CHINA'S STRATEGIC AND MILITARY INTERESTS IN AFRICA

- China's economic globalisation relies on stable rules and conflict prevention.
- In 2008, Chinese warships began anti-piracy operations off Africa's coast, marking its first naval engagement since the 15th century.
- By 2012, China's focus expanded to safeguarding broader economic interests, including investments in ports through the Maritime Silk Road project.
- In 2017, China established its first overseas naval base in Djibouti.
- China's military involvement in Africa, which began **with support to guerrilla groups in the 1970s, now includes arms sales, military training, and support for African Union operations.**
- Compared to the US, France, and the UK, which have long standing military presences, China's military activities are growing.
- China has contributed USD 7 billion to UN peacekeeping and engaged in various missions, arms agreements, and joint military exercises.

- Its presence in Djibouti **supports counterterrorism and protects economic interests**, aiming to enhance soft power and integrate Africa into its geopolitical strategy.

THE WESTERN RESPONSE

- The West, along with allies like Japan and India, is increasingly countering China's economic and diplomatic efforts.
- For example, the **EllaLink transatlantic data cable, funded by the European Investment Bank, offers an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**
- The **EU and India launched a global infrastructure partnership in 2021**, not explicitly as an anti-China alliance.
- Additionally, the **India Africa Trade Council, established in January 2021**, plans to open trade offices in India to enhance trade with Africa.

HOW SHOULD OTHER STAKEHOLDERS INTERPRET CHINA'S INCREASED ACTIVITY IN AFRICA?

1. African agency and global interests:

- Africa's future should primarily be determined by its own states and people.
- Historically, world powers have often viewed Africa through their strategic and economic interests, especially during the Cold War.
- This perspective has led to negative reactions from Africans when external representatives prioritise their own agendas over the continent's needs and aspirations.

2. Diplomatic opportunities and challenges:

- Countries face few barriers to engaging diplomatically in Africa.
- The main issue is not China's growing presence, but the prolonged neglect by the EU and US, which lack a cohesive strategy to counter China or enhance their own presence.
- Emerging initiatives by the EU, US, Japan, and India aim to offer alternatives to China's dominance.
- Effective engagement will require streamlining bureaucratic processes and investment requirements while maintaining core values.

3. Risks of debt dependency:

- African nations should be cautious about accumulating excessive debt with China, as it may lead to significant political and economic dependencies.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY

- Evaluating the risks of such financial commitments is essential.

4. Constructive engagement with China:

- The EU, US, and allies should adopt a more systematic approach to incorporating China into diplomatic, commercial, and NGO forums in Africa to establish mutually beneficial norms and enhance cooperation.

5. Future potential of Africa:

- Africa currently contributes a small portion of the global economy, but IMF projections show sub-Saharan Africa will have more working-age individuals than the rest of the world in 20 years.
- Over the next 40 years, the region will add one billion potential consumers and producers.
- With better institutions and investments in human capital, Africa could greatly boost global economic dynamism and impact global challenges like climate change and terrorism.

6. Geopolitical considerations:

- While Africa is not the primary battleground in the rising geopolitical tensions between China and the West, the international community should stay vigilant for any aggressive policies by China in Africa.
- Both African nations and Western allies should be prepared and strategize for potential developments.

INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS: RECENT ENGAGEMENTS

- The year 2023 marked a significant milestone for India's foreign policy, **with the country leveraging its G20 presidency to strengthen its leadership role within the Global South.**
- A notable achievement of this presidency was the successful **push for permanent membership of the African Union (AU) in the G20**, a platform traditionally dominated by the world's major powers.
- This inclusion not only enhances Africa's ability to influence global affairs but also **underscores India's commitment to elevating the continent's role on the global stage.**

STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC TIES

- India and Africa share a robust partnership built on mutual values and historical goodwill.

- Trade between the two has surged from US\$ 68.5 billion in 2011-12 to **US\$ 90.5 billion in 2022-23**, and **Indian investments have made India one of the top five investors in Africa**, with cumulative investments of **US\$ 73.9 billion between 1996 and 2022.**
- Collaborative efforts at international forums, such as the **WTO**, where **India and Africa have jointly advocated for issues like agricultural subsidies and COVID-19 vaccine equity**, highlight the depth of their engagement.

ADDRESSING THE DELAYS AND CHALLENGES

- Despite these positive developments, there has been an **undue delay in convening the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit**, which was postponed for nine years after the third summit in 2015.
- Although the pandemic was a significant factor, the **AU has engaged in several high-profile summits with other partners**, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the US-Africa Leaders Summit.
- Given that the AU is set to host the next India-Africa Forum Summit, **India must actively work with the AU to organise it promptly.**

NAVIGATING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

- The forthcoming summit should not only build on the achievements of the G20 summit but also address the **evolving challenges faced by Africa.**
- The continent is grappling with severe issues including food insecurity, which has worsened with 20% of the population-nearly 282 million people-being undernourished in 2022.
- The dual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia conflict have exacerbated economic vulnerabilities, leading to significant debt distress and heightened food insecurity.
- Furthermore, the rise in political instability, evidenced by a surge in military coups, adds to the urgency for a revamped engagement strategy.

KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR THE FUTURE

To address these challenges, the upcoming India-Africa Forum Summit must prioritise several critical areas:

1. **Food security:** Given Africa's current dependence on food imports and its vulnerability to food insecurity, strengthening agricultural transformation and food security should be central to the India-Africa agenda.

2. **Debt sustainability:** With African countries facing disproportionate borrowing costs due to global financial biases, reforming the global financial system and addressing the continent's debt burden are essential.
3. **Strategic engagement:** India and Africa should use the summit as a platform to establish a forward-looking agenda that addresses these contemporary needs and fosters deeper collaboration.

The latest FOCAC summit offers several lessons for India:

1. **Need for consistent engagement:** India must prioritise consistent engagement with Africa at the highest political levels. Since the last India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015, there has been a significant gap in Africa-centred diplomatic initiatives.
2. **Financial Commitment:** Beyond historical ties and rhetorical support, India needs to back its Africa strategy with substantial financial resources to enhance cooperation effectively. This requires increased investment and aid to compete with China's growing influence.
3. **Re-evaluation of Diplomatic Priorities:** Africa's position in India's diplomatic agenda should be reassessed to ensure it receives the attention and resources commensurate with its strategic importance.

INDIA JOINS US-LED MINERAL SECURITY FINANCE NETWORK

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #INTERNATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS



- India has officially joined the Minerals Security Finance Network (MSFN), a US-led effort to secure critical mineral supply chains.
- The MSFN is an extension of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), initiated by the US in 2022. India became a member of the MSP in June 2023.
- **Collaborating Nations:** The pact involves 14 countries and the European Union, emphasizing collective action to mitigate dependence on China for critical resources.
- **Focus on Minerals:** The MSP and MSFN focus on supply chains for minerals such as:
 - Cobalt
 - Nickel
 - Lithium
 - 17 rare earth minerals
- **Partnership Goals:**
 - Strengthen cooperation among member countries.
 - Address the rising global demand for critical minerals, crucial for clean energy transition.
 - Encourage collaboration between public and private sectors for investment in mineral supply chains.
- **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Export Credit Agencies (ECAs):** The partnership aims to create synergies between DFIs and ECAs from member countries to enhance impact and investment.
- **Remarks by US Officials:**
 - US Undersecretary of State Jose W. Fernandez highlighted the need for increased production capacity to ensure resilience in supply chains.
- **Significance for India:**
 - India's inclusion in the MSP is pivotal for its growth strategy, particularly in transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) and boosting electronics manufacturing and semiconductor production.
- **Diplomatic Efforts:** India's induction was the result of a strong diplomatic push, addressing concerns over not being part of this strategic partnership aimed at reducing reliance on China.
- **Project Initiatives:** The MSP is exploring around 150 projects, with a focus on:
 - Establishing a critical minerals and metals cooperation forum.
 - Developing battery materials.
 - Creating a minerals processing facility in South America.
- **Mineral Dependencies:**
 - India has limited deposits of certain rare earth elements (REEs), particularly high-demand heavy REs (HREEs), with significant reliance on China, which dominates global production.

• **Future Outlook:**

- India aims to enter the lithium value chain as the EV sector undergoes potential disruptions, with advancements in battery technology on the horizon.

India's participation in the MSFN underscores its commitment to securing essential mineral supplies, enhancing resilience against global supply chain disruptions, and supporting its energy transition goals.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. With reference to Mineral Security Finance Network, consider the following statements:

- It is initiated by United Nation Environment Programme.
- India is a member of this network since its inception.
- It aims to address rising global demand for critical minerals.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None of the above |

Q2. Consider the following:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. China | 2. Vietnam |
| 3. Cambodia | 4. Thailand |
| 5. Brunei | |

How many of the above countries share a border with the South China Sea?

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| (a) Only two | (b) Only three |
| (c) Only four | (d) All five |

Q3. FOCAC is an international organisation with a focus on, which of the following?

- | |
|--|
| (a) Promoting climate sensitive agriculture. |
| (b) Promoting relations between China and Africa |
| (c) Promoting peace in the middle east region |
| (d) Promoting women empowerment |

Q4. Consider the following statements about Pact for Future:

- It was adopted by the UN Security Council.
- Global Digital Compact is a part of the Pact for Future.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 2 only |
| (c) Both 1 and 2 | (d) Neither 1 nor 2 |

Q5. Consider the following statements about ASEAN:

- East Timor and Papua New Guinea are not members of ASEAN but located in the South East Asian Region.
- ASEAN countries do not have a common currency similar to the EU.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 2 only |
| (c) Both 1 and 2 | (d) Neither 1 nor 2 |

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. Highlight the need for making global institutions relevant to the changing context. In this context, how the 'Pact for Future' will make the UN system more relevant.

Q2. India needs to be committed to ASEAN centrality as part of its Act East Policy. Comment.

Answers: 1-a, 2-b, 3-b, 4-b, 5-c

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

GS PAPER I & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

MAINS

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHILDREN

#CHILDREN #VULNERABLE GROUP #GS-II #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

The Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, has recently proposed setting a minimum age limit for social media usage, sparking a debate on whether children should be barred from social media. This conversation is reflective of global concerns about children's safety online, the role of parents and technology companies, and the positive and negative impacts of social media on young minds.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHILDREN

Positive Impact:

- 1. Educational Opportunities:** Social media platforms offer educational resources and learning communities that can enhance children's knowledge and skills.
 - Example:** Platforms like YouTube has been used widely for educational tutorials, fostering academic development.
- 2. Social Connection and Emotional Support:** For children, especially during the pandemic, social media served as a way to maintain friendships and receive emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation.
 - Example:** Research from UNICEF highlights that social media platforms helped adolescents maintain social connections during COVID-19 lockdowns, improving their mental well-being.
- 3. Creativity and Expression:** Platforms like Instagram and TikTok allow children to express their creativity through art, music, and videos, offering a space for self-expression and identity exploration.

4. Digital Skills Development: Early exposure to social media equips children with digital literacy, a crucial skill for future employment in a technology-driven world.

- Example:** According to a 2022 report by the World Economic Forum, digital literacy is considered one of the top skills needed in the 21st-century workplace, and social media familiarity contributes to this.

Negative Impact:

1. Exposure to Harmful Content: Children can be exposed to inappropriate, violent, or harmful content, including cyberbullying, which can lead to emotional and psychological distress.

Example: UNICEF's report on "Children in a Digital World" highlights that around 1 in 3 internet users globally are children, and their increased exposure during the pandemic has raised concerns about online safety and cyberbullying.

2. Addiction and Time Management Issues: Excessive time spent on social media can interfere with physical activities, sleep, and academics, potentially leading to a sedentary lifestyle.

Example: The WHO released recommendations on screen time for children, indicating that children under 5 years of age should not be exposed to more than 1 hour of screen time per day. Excessive use of screens, including social media, is associated with negative outcomes like poor sleep, obesity, and behavioural issues in adolescents.

3. Privacy and Data Exploitation: Children may unknowingly share personal information, putting their privacy at risk and making them vulnerable to data exploitation by social media platforms.

4. Mental Health Concerns: Continuous exposure to unrealistic portrayals of beauty and success on platforms can negatively impact self-esteem and body image, leading to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

WAY FORWARD

1. **Stronger Regulations for Platforms:** Governments need to ensure that platforms adopt child-specific safety features. **The UK's Age-Appropriate Design Code (2020)** serves as a model, pushing platforms to implement better default privacy settings and reducing risks for children.
- **Example:** In response to this code, **Meta and Google introduced 128 safety features**, improving the online environment for minors.
2. **Parental Guidance and Digital Literacy Programs:** Parents should be provided with resources to guide their children in safe digital use. Schools should incorporate digital literacy into curricula, teaching children how to navigate the online world responsibly.
3. **Balanced Approach to Screen Time:** Education systems must strike a balance between leveraging digital tools for learning and promoting offline activities like sports and physical education to ensure holistic development.
- **Example:** As digital learning becomes integral to school curriculums, there is also a need to emphasize outdoor activities to prevent excessive screen time.
4. **Addressing "Sharenting" and Child Influencers:** Laws should address the practice of parents sharing children's private moments online and ensure safeguards for child influencers who enter marketing contracts at a young age.
- **Example:** France's law restricting parental access to the income of child influencers until they turn 16 ensures that their earnings are protected.

Conclusion: While banning children from social media may seem like a solution to online safety concerns, it may not effectively address the issue. Instead, a multi-pronged approach involving stronger regulations for platforms, parental involvement, and improved digital literacy programs is needed. Social media can be a double-edged sword for children, offering educational and social benefits but also exposing them to potential risks. Moving forward, the focus should be on creating safe, enriching online environments where children can thrive.

INDIA'S URBAN-RURAL CONTINUUM

#GOVERNANCE #RURAL-URBAN #GOVERNANCE
INTERVENTION #URBANIZATION

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*India is undergoing significant demographic changes, marking this century as its urban century. The focus is **not only on the shift from rural to urban living** but also on the demand for **infrastructure** to support these changes. The urbanization process is evident in **Tier II and Tier III cities**, as well as the **peripheries of major urban centers**. However, India continues to view its challenges as **distinctly rural or urban**, neglecting the **interconnectedness of the urban-rural continuum**.*

This analytical article will **delve into the current policy framework, highlight financial constraints, and propose governance reforms needed to address this continuum effectively.**

1. Current Policy Framework: A Fragmented Approach
India's current policy framework **separates rural and urban development**. This compartmentalization has led to a **lack of cohesive planning and allocation of resources, resulting in inefficiencies**. Existing programs like the **Swachh Bharat Mission and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)** miss the urban-rural continuum.

- **AMRUT's Limitation:** Funding for urban infrastructure, particularly liquid waste management, is proposed under AMRUT, initially covering 500 cities and now extended to all statutory towns. **However, many census towns and urban villages, which accommodate a significant number of migrant and informal workers, do not qualify for funding under AMRUT.**

- **Swachh Bharat Mission's Shortcomings:** The mission's division into urban and rural components **limits joint infrastructure development**. For instance, Swachh Bharat Mission-Rural addresses liquid waste management similar to Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban. However, **building treatment plants collaboratively is not permissible.**

2. Financial Decentralization and Constraints: A major concern in India's urbanization efforts is the **over-centralization of finances**, which has hampered the autonomy of local bodies. The 13th Finance Commission highlighted how the financial **needs of local bodies are being "asphyxiated."**

- **Tied Grants vs. Untied Grants:** Local bodies are primarily funded through two types of grants: tied and untied. The increasing reliance on tied grants has created a bottleneck in local governance, as tied grants are allocated for specific purposes under centrally sponsored schemes. This limits the discretion of local bodies to utilize funds based on their unique needs.

- **Example:** Suppose a city receives a tied grant under the Swachh Bharat Mission. The funds can only be used for sanitation-related projects, even if the city urgently requires resources for road repairs or water supply systems. As a result, despite having funds, the city cannot address its immediate priorities. This situation is common in many towns and cities, where an increasing proportion of grants are tied to centrally sponsored schemes, thereby limiting the flexibility and autonomy of local governance.

On the other hand, untied grants provide local bodies with the flexibility to allocate resources as per their specific requirements. However, the proportion of untied grants has decreased over time, putting more strain on local governments that need to cater to the growing complexities of urbanization.

- **Property Tax vs. State GST:** Local bodies primarily rely on property taxes as a source of revenue. However, the lack of linkage **between the rise in property taxes and the State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) limits their financial capacity.**

- **Example:** Suppose a city's economy is growing, and the SGST revenue in the state increases as a result of economic activity. Ideally, property taxes in that city should increase proportionately to reflect the economic development and property valuation. However, if this linkage does not happen, the city's revenue from property taxes stagnates. In this scenario, the city might fail to meet the conditions set by centrally sponsored schemes for tied grants, which often require local bodies to demonstrate adequate revenue collection efforts, including property tax growth.

- 3. **Governance Models:** The current framework, established by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, envisioned **collaborative planning between rural and urban local bodies.** However, this vision has not been fully realized.

- **Strengthening District Planning Committees (DPCs):** DPCs, meant to include Zila Panchayats and urban local bodies, have become mere appendages to district bureaucracy in most states, limiting their ability to foster urban-rural integration.

Kerala's integrated governance model provides a blueprint for managing the urban-rural continuum. Here, urban and rural local bodies fall under the same ministry, allowing for swift, coordinated decision-making.

- **Case Study:** A proposed solid waste landfill site in the town's periphery was withdrawn due to public pressure, demonstrating the flexibility and responsiveness of an integrated governance model.

WAY FORWARD: India must move away from compartmentalized planning and resource allocation towards a holistic urban-rural continuum perspective.

1. Unified Financial Models

- **Decentralization of Finances:** Financial devolution needs to be restructured to give more **autonomy to local bodies. Untied grants should increase** to enable flexible, locally tailored solutions that bridge the urban-rural divide.
- **Integrated Funding:** Programs like **AMRUT and Swachh Bharat Mission should allow for integrated infrastructure projects**, such as joint liquid waste management plants for urban and peri-urban areas.

2. Revisiting Constitutional Provisions

- **Empowering Local Self-Government:** The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments should be revisited to strengthen the intended model of governance, ensuring that **DPCs play a central role in decision-making.**
- **Unified Ministry for Local Self-Governance:** Like Kerala, other states could benefit from having a **single ministry overseeing both urban and rural local bodies**, promoting coherent policy-making and implementation.

CONCLUSION: India's transformation into an urban nation requires a paradigm shift in how challenges are addressed. The traditional urban-rural divide in policy-making, financial decentralization, and governance structures must evolve to accommodate the interconnected nature of modern settlements.

TRANSGENDER

#TRANSGENDER #VULNERABLE GROUP #SOCIAL JUSTICE #WELFARE SCHEMES FOR VULNERABLE SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION BY THE CENTRE AND STATES #ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH, EDUCATION, HUMAN RESOURCES.

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The article argues that transgender rights are a fundamental human rights issue, not an abstract debate. It parallels current discussions with past struggles for equality, critiquing "gender-critical" and right-wing ideologies for denying trans identities. The focus is on affirming trans rights and dignity, reflecting society's values.

ABOUT TRANSGENDER: Transgender is a general term that describes people whose gender identity, or their internal sense of being male, female, or something else, does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. By contrast, the term cisgender describes people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

As per the **Census of 2011**, the total population of Transgender in India is **4.9lakh**

CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS IN INDIA

1. Social Stigma and Discrimination

- Transgender individuals often face widespread social stigma, leading to marginalization and exclusion in various aspects of life:
 - **Family Rejection:** Many experience rejection from their families, pushing them into isolation and economic vulnerability.
 - **Educational Barriers:** Schools and educational institutions are often unprepared to accommodate diverse sexual identities, leading to:
 - Bullying and harassment.
 - High dropout rates among transgender children.
 - **Workplace Discrimination:** Despite availability of educational qualifications, transgender people often face exclusion in professional environments.

- **Healthcare:** Access to gender-affirming and inclusive healthcare is limited, further marginalizing the community.
- **Housing and Public Facilities:** Direct discrimination in housing markets and the lack of gender-neutral toilets pose additional challenges.
- 2. **Violence and Harassment:** Transgender individuals are disproportionately subjected to violence and harassment, both in public spaces and within their homes.
- 3. **Cultural Insensitivity:** A lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity towards transgender issues perpetuates discrimination, reinforcing societal biases.
- 4. **Economic Vulnerability:** Due to discrimination in the job market, many transgender individuals face economic hardship, leading to:
 - **Engagement in high-risk professions, such as sex work or begging, as a means of survival.**
 - **Resorting to the exploitative entertainment industry due to a lack of formal employment opportunities.**
 - **Those rejected by their families are often left to scavenge for food and take up any available job.**
- 5. **Mental Health Concerns:** The cumulative effects of societal pressures, discrimination, and lack of support significantly impact the mental health of transgender individuals.
- 6. **Identity Documentation:** Obtaining accurate identity documents that reflect their gender is a persistent challenge:
 - Despite the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which recognizes the right to self-perceived gender identity, coercion to conform to non-affirming gender identities in workplaces remains prevalent.
 - Some official documents, such as passports, still lack a gender marker for transgender individuals, hindering their legal recognition.

REASONS FOR NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRANSGENDER PERSONS IN INDIA

1. Cultural and Social Norms

- **Rigid Gender Roles:** Traditional Indian society strictly adheres to binary gender roles, stigmatizing those who do not conform. Transgender individuals challenge these norms, leading to social ostracism.

- **Caste and Community Norms:** Many communities enforce strict adherence to traditional roles. Transgender persons, particularly the historically recognized but stigmatized hijra community, face discrimination for not fitting into predefined societal roles.

2. Religious Beliefs and Misinterpretations

- **Religious Texts and Interpretations:** Some conservative religious groups cite certain religious texts to view transgender identity as unnatural or immoral, despite historical instances of gender fluidity in various cultures.
- **Lack of Religious Acceptance:** Many religious communities exclude transgender individuals from practices and events, leading to social isolation.

3. Lack of Education and Awareness

- **Ignorance About Gender Diversity:** Widespread lack of understanding about gender identity fuels prejudice, with confusion between sex (biological attributes) and gender (socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities).
- **Inadequate Education System:** School curricula often fail to cover topics related to gender diversity. UNESCO studies indicate that 60% of transgender students face bullying, contributing to high dropout rates.

4. Media Representation

- **Stereotypical Depictions:** Transgender individuals are often portrayed negatively in media, either as comic relief or villains, reinforcing harmful stereotypes.
- **Lack of Positive Role Models:** Mainstream media lacks positive representation of transgender persons, resulting in limited understanding and empathy in society.

5. Economic Marginalization

- **Employment Discrimination:** Discrimination in the job market results in high unemployment rates among transgender persons. A survey by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) found that 96% of transgender individuals are denied jobs due to their gender identity.
- **Economic Dependency:** Due to limited employment opportunities, many transgender individuals are compelled to engage in begging or sex work, perpetuating negative stereotypes and social stigma.

6. Legal and Policy Framework

- **Inadequate Legal Protections:** Although the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 provides some legal recognition, its implementation is criticized for not adequately addressing self-identification and non-discrimination.

- **Judicial Bias:** Transgender persons often face discrimination within the legal system, resulting in unfair treatment and limited access to justice.

7. Family and Community Rejection

- **Fear of Social Stigma:** Families often reject transgender members to avoid social stigma, resulting in homelessness and lack of support for many transgender individuals.
- **Domestic Violence:** Many transgender persons experience violence and abuse from family members who refuse to accept their gender identity.

1. **Historical Context:** Colonial-era laws, such as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (which criminalized same-sex relationships), have contributed to the stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community and persist in influencing societal attitudes.

2. **Fear of the Unknown:** Negative attitudes often stem from fear and misunderstanding of transgender identities, leading to defensive reactions and hostile policies.

3. **Intersectionality:** Compounded Discrimination:

- Issues such as sexism, classism, ethnicity, and socio-economic status intersect, exacerbating the prejudice faced by transgender individuals, particularly those from minority or marginalized backgrounds.

STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

- In a landmark judgment in 2014, the Supreme Court of India, in the case of the **National Legal Services Authority versus Union of India**, set the precedent for the rights of transgender individuals by officially acknowledging '**transgender**' as a distinct '**third gender**.' The ruling not only bestowed legal recognition on the transgender community but also outlined crucial measures to prevent discrimination against them and safeguard their rights.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

- **Definition of a transgender person:** The act defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

variations, genderqueers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.

- Self-identification: A transgender person may make an application to District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating gender as 'transgender'.
- Prohibition against discrimination: Prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in
 - Education, employment and healthcare. Access to goods, facilities, and opportunities available to the public. Right to move, reside, rent, or otherwise occupy the property.
- Opportunity to hold public or private office.
- Welfare measures by the government: Mandated government to undertake measures to ensure full inclusion, and participation of transgender persons in society and steps for their rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, create schemes that are transgender sensitive and promote their participation in cultural activities.
- Offences and penalties: Recognize offences against transgender persons like forced or bonded labour; denial of use of public places; physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic abuse. Penalties for these offences vary between 6 months & 2 years, and a fine.
- **National Council for Transgender Persons (NCT):** consists of
 - Union Minister for Social Justice (Chairperson).
 - Minister of State for Social Justice (Vice-Chairperson)
 - A representative from ministries including Health, Home Affairs, and Human Resources Development. Other members include representatives of the NITI Aayog and the National Human Rights Commission.
 - Representatives from the transgender community and five experts from non-governmental organisations.

The Council will advise the central government as well as monitor the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons. It will also redress the grievances of transgender persons.

SMILE SCHEME

- SMILE stands for Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise. It is an umbrella scheme to provide welfare measures to the Transgender community and people engaged in begging.
- **Two sub-schemes:**

(1) Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons

(2) Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in the Act of Begging.

COMPONENTS UNDER COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION FOR WELFARE OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS SCHEME:

1. Scholarships for Transgender Students studying in IX and till post-graduation to enable them to complete their education.
2. Skill Development and Livelihood under the PM-DAKSH scheme of the Department.
3. Composite Medical Health: A comprehensive package in convergence with PM-JAY supporting Gender-Reaffirmation surgeries through selected hospitals.
4. Housing in the form of 'Garima Greh': Shelter Homes 'Garima Greh' where food, clothing, recreational facilities, skill development opportunities, recreational activities, medical support etc. will be provided.
5. Provision of Transgender Protection Cell: Setting up of Transgender Protection in each state to monitor cases of offences and to ensure timely registration, investigation and prosecution of offences.
6. E-Services (National Portal & Helpline and Advertisement) and other Welfare Measures.

COMPONENTS UNDER COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE ACT OF BEGGING:

1. Survey and identification: The Implementing Agencies shall conduct a Survey and Identification of beneficiaries.
2. Mobilisation: Outreach work will be done to mobilise the persons engaged in begging to avail the services available in the Shelter Homes.
3. Rescue/ Shelter Home: The shelter homes will facilitate education for children engaged in the act of Begging and children of persons engaged in the act of Begging.
4. Comprehensive resettlement.

Reforming the transgender community requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses various aspects of their lives.

HERE ARE STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

- **Legal Protections:** Ensure effective implementation of laws like the Transgender Persons (Protection of

Rights) Act, 2019, and take steps to eliminate discrimination, ensuring equal rights and opportunities.

- **Education and Awareness:** Implement educational programs to promote awareness and understanding of transgender issues, fostering acceptance and reducing stigma.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Create policies and initiatives that promote inclusivity in the workplace, providing equal opportunities for transgender individuals and eliminating discrimination.
- **Healthcare Access:** Develop transgender-friendly healthcare services, addressing specific health needs and ensuring access to gender-affirming treatments.
- **Gender-Neutral Facilities:** Establish gender-neutral facilities, including toilets and changing rooms, to ensure that public spaces are inclusive and accessible to transgender individuals.
- **Skill Development:** Provide skill development programs and vocational training to empower transgender individuals economically, facilitating their entry into various professions.
- **Media Representation:** Promote positive and diverse representations of transgender individuals in media to challenge stereotypes and foster a more inclusive societal perception.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Encourage cultural sensitivity training for various sectors, including law enforcement, healthcare, and educational institutions, to ensure respectful and unbiased interactions with the transgender community.

By taking these steps, society can work towards creating an environment that respects the rights, dignity, and well-being of transgender individuals, fostering an inclusive and equitable society.

EXPANSION OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA (AB PM- JAY) FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

#HEALTH #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

MORE ABOUT NEWS

• Approval by Union Cabinet (September 2024):

- **Health Coverage Expansion:** As per the Union Cabinet announcement in September 2024, the government extended health coverage under AB PM-JAY to all senior citizens aged 70 and above, benefitting around 6 crore senior citizens and 4.5 crore families.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Each senior citizen will receive health insurance cover worth ₹5 lakh annually under this new provision.
- **Distinct Health Cards:** Eligible citizens will receive separate AB PM-JAY health cards for easy identification and service delivery.

• Top-Up for Existing Beneficiaries:

- Senior citizens already covered under AB PM-JAY will receive an additional top-up of ₹5 lakh, providing exclusive health coverage for themselves.

- **Choice of Scheme:** Senior citizens already benefiting from other schemes like Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), and Ayushman CAPF will have the flexibility to choose between these schemes or AB PM-JAY.

About Ayushman Bharat : It is a flagship scheme of Government of India, was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). This initiative has been designed to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its underlining commitment, which is to "leave no one behind."

• Ayushman Bharat adopts a continuum of care approach, comprising two inter-related components, which are -

- **Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs):** In February 2018, the Government of India announced the creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) by **transforming the existing Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres**. These centres are to deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) bringing healthcare closer to the homes of people. They cover both, maternal and child health services and non-communicable diseases, including free essential drugs and diagnostic services.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** The second component under Ayushman Bharat is PM-JAY, the largest health assurance scheme in the world, which aims at providing a health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.

SIGNIFICANCE OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT

- (i) The increasing life expectancy rate over 68.3 years has improved the quality of health care in India.
- (ii) Health care is an essential factor, along with other variants like income, hygiene, and nutrition.
- (iii) According to the World Health Organization, every country must invest at least 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on their health.
- (iv) The out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare is 40% in India.
- (v) The Government Scheme not only covers for expensive treatments but also provides quality services to all the people eligible under the plan.

PROVISIONS OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA (PM-JAY)

- 1. Largest Public Health Assurance Scheme:** The scheme is the world's largest publicly funded health assurance program.
 - Launched in 2018, the Ayushman Bharat scheme covers 55 crore individuals or 12.34 crore families, offering health insurance worth ₹5 lakh per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- 2. Coverage of Pre and Post-Hospitalization Costs:** Costs of diagnostics and medicines are covered for:
 - Up to 3 days before hospitalization (pre-hospitalization).
 - 15 days after hospitalization (post-hospitalization).
 - All pre-existing medical conditions are also covered.
- 3. Ayushman Card:** The Ayushman Card acts like a pre-paid card worth ₹5 lakh.
 - Can be used to avail free treatment at more than 27,000 empanelled hospitals across India.
 - Every hospital must have Pradhan Mantri Arogya Mitras (PMAMs) to assist the beneficiaries.
- 4. Interstate Portability:** The scheme offers interstate portability, allowing beneficiaries to access treatment at empanelled hospitals across different states.

- 5. Aadhaar-Based Authentication:** Aadhaar-based authentication is required for:
 - Card creation.
 - Registration for treatment under the scheme.

- 6. Administration by the National Health Authority (NHA):** The scheme is administered by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

- NHA has a governing board with representatives from the central government, domain experts, and state authorities.
- Post-Discharge Follow-up:
 - NHA's call center contacts beneficiaries 48 hours post-discharge to assess treatment quality.
 - A second follow-up call is made 15 days post-discharge to check the patient's prognosis.

- 7. Inclusivity:** PM-JAY is an inclusive scheme, covering transgender individuals among its beneficiaries.
 - 50 special packages were designed for transgender healthcare needs, including Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).

- 8. Anti-Fraud Mechanism:** The National Anti-Fraud Unit (NAFU) designs, implements, and oversees anti-fraud initiatives within the scheme.
 - Anti-Fraud Units also operate at the state level to prevent misuse and fraud in the healthcare system.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA (PM-JAY)

- 1. Nudging of State Governments:** The scheme has encouraged states and Union Territories, responsible for public health under India's federal structure, to expand healthcare coverage to more beneficiaries.
 - National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 71st round: It was found that 85.9% of rural and 82% of urban households lacked healthcare insurance. PM-JAY specifically targets deprived and poor families, addressing this critical gap.
- 2. Effective fiscal management:** AB-PMJAY has reduced **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)**, which has been a significant financial burden for Indian households.
 - Over 17% of Indians previously spent more than 10% of their household budget on healthcare, leading many into debt. The scheme mitigates these financial risks by providing coverage for secondary and tertiary care.

3. **Bridge the gap:** PM-JAY has effectively connected healthcare providers with service users by uniting them through government channels, thereby addressing the shortfall in access to healthcare services for marginalized populations.
4. **Spirit of Inclusiveness:** The scheme promotes inclusivity, with **48% of treatments being availed by women**, and also covers **transgender individuals**.
 - Beneficiaries can access services even if they do not possess an Ayushman card at the time of treatment, ensuring no one is left out.
5. **Regularisation of process:** In order to engage private healthcare providers effectively, **Health Benefit Packages (HBPs)**, covering in-patient treatment, have been revised **five times** in the last five years to stay relevant and comprehensive.
6. **Early Claim settlement:** To ensure smooth and timely financial management, efforts are being made to settle claims within a **15-day standard**. States like **Uttarakhand** have managed to reduce the settlement time to under seven days, setting an example for others.
7. **Reward to Hospitals:** To encourage trustworthy and efficient hospital service, hospitals with a good record receive **50% of the claim amount** as an **upfront payment** immediately after submitting their claims, without the need for adjudication.
8. **Interoperability:** The scheme is particularly beneficial for migrants, providing **interoperability** across states and ensuring that the poor and marginalized can access healthcare services even when they move across borders. This has proven vital in emergencies.
9. **Effective Monitoring:** The end-to-end **digital service delivery** system eliminates bias, ensuring transparency. The **National Health Authority (NHA)** monitors the scheme's implementation through internal checks and a **public dashboard**, enabling real-time tracking.
10. **Fraud management:** The establishment of institutions like the **National Anti-Fraud Unit (NAFU)** has significantly reduced fraud in the registration, verification, and insurance claims processes, ensuring accountability and integrity within the system.
11. **Use of technology:** Leveraging **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Machine Learning (ML)**, the NHA uses advanced technology to detect **suspicious**

transactions and potential **fraud**, ensuring efficient monitoring and reducing misuse of the scheme.

ISSUES

1. **Exclusion Error:** One of the most significant challenges is the **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data**, which has been criticized for **non-transparent methods** of data collection and outdated population figures.
 - These errors can lead to **eligible beneficiaries being left out**, and hence, there is a need to update and improve the estimates for better targeting.
2. **Asymmetric Federalism:** Several states have increased the coverage of the scheme via state schemes. This entails increased expenditure by states which choose to expand coverage, such as Kerala. However, this may be particularly hard for cash-strapped states like Bihar which depend on Union government funding more than their own resources.
3. **Ghost Beneficiaries:** Unrelated ineligible beneficiaries are admitted based on forging a relationship with the head of the beneficiary family. The challenge that lies ahead for National Health Authority is to strengthen artificial intelligence to pick up all such instances of fraud.
4. **Future Fiscal Burden:** As **insurance coverage** grows, there is a possibility of a rise in **hospitalization rates**, leading to increased claim ratios and higher premiums, which may strain government finances.
 - Insurers, needing to run a profitable business, may demand higher premiums, creating **fiscal stress** on the program.
5. **Infrastructural and man-power issues:** Public health infrastructure faces severe deficiencies:
 - **10% of Primary Health Centers (PHCs)** lack doctors.
 - **56% of sub-centers (SCs)** lack staff washrooms, **73% lack separate washrooms**, and **36% of PHCs** do not have gender-segregated facilities.These infrastructural gaps undermine the scheme's effectiveness.
6. **Compliance Burden:** In rural India, beneficiaries face a significant compliance burden due to **long distances** to hospitals, which makes access to care difficult. This often results in a **lower than expected usage** of health services.

7. **Double Charging:** Publicly Funded Health Insurance Schemes (PFHIS) are prone to double charging, where the hospital makes the **patient pay for some or all services/medicines/diagnostics which are covered under the PFHI and also claim the reimbursement from the PFHI.**

8. **Information Asymmetry:** There is a **lack of awareness** among beneficiaries about their entitlements under the scheme.

- o The **hierarchical structure** of the healthcare system and the complexity of the scheme exacerbate this issue, leading to **low utilization** of the available benefits.

9. **Outpatient Care:** AB-PMJAY does not cover **outpatient care**, which constitutes between **40% and 80%** of **Out-of-Pocket Health Expenditure (OOPHE)**. This is a significant gap, as outpatient care is a major contributor to rising health expenses.

10. **Upcoding:** Upcoding is the practice of fraudulent medical billing **in which the bill for a medical service is more expensive than it should have been** based on the service that was performed.

11. **Cost:** The rates provided by PM-JAY serve as **guidelines** and have not been strictly followed by states, which has either kept **big hospitals at bay** or resulted in disparities in service costs across states.

12. **Empanelment:** **Empaneling hospitals** in remote areas, such as in the **northeast** and **Leh**, has been difficult, creating significant **gaps in healthcare access** for people living in these regions.

13. **Inequity in access:** There is **inequity in access** to healthcare, especially for the poor. Many patients suffering from serious illnesses find that their conditions are not listed among the **medical packages** covered under AB-PMJAY, leaving them without adequate support.

14. **Implementation:** The scheme faces several implementation issues:

- Improper procedures for **empanelment** and **cost fixation** mechanisms.
- **Inordinate delays** in reimbursement to hospitals.
- **Lack of standardization** in services across hospitals, with the **National Accreditation Board for Hospitals (NABH)** certification covering only some hospitals.
- Budgetary constraints are also a major issue, as the **AB budget**, while substantial, may not be sufficient to

cover the growing costs of the scheme. This has resulted in **payment backlogs** to hospitals, which has led some hospitals to **limit the number of patients** they accept under the scheme.

- Beneficiaries often **prefer private hospitals** over public ones due to perceived better quality care and fewer capacity constraints in private institutions.

15. **Low Monitoring and Grievance Redressal:** Monitoring of the scheme is suboptimal, with several states yet to form **State Health Authorities (SHAs)** or establish **Anti-Fraud Cells** and **Claim Review Committees**.

- For example, a **CAG report** revealed the fraudulent registration of **7.5 lakh beneficiaries** under a single phone number.

- Additionally, the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** guidelines for tracking expenditure flows have not been fully complied with.

16. **Parallel Systems and Beneficiary Overlap:** Some states operate **parallel transaction management systems**, leading to the **overlap of beneficiaries** between Ayushman Bharat and state-specific health schemes. This creates confusion and may result in inefficiencies in service delivery.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Improve the public health sector by dealing with limited resources and creating systems that encourage healthcare providers and patients to support universal health coverage.
- There is a need to consolidate government healthcare spending and clear payment backlogs owed to hospitals by the government.
- To realise the scheme's full potential, the National Health Authority (NHA) along with its counterparts in the states should aim to provide every possible beneficiary with an Ayushman Card.
- State governments which have not formed the SHAs, Fraud cells etc. should consult and through dialogue the bodies should be constituted to improve the interoperability of the scheme.
- The issue of upcoding, dead patients availing benefits, double charging should be addressed by reducing information asymmetries and increasing the awareness of the people.
- Parallel transactions management system creates ambiguities in management and ensuring

accountability, states and Centre should come up with a unified and transparent system.

- Recommendations by Indian Medical Association (IMA):
 - i. Government hospitals, which already provide services free of charge, should be excluded from the scope of the scheme. Instead, public hospitals should receive direct funding from the government.
 - ii. India should move away from utilizing insurance-based healthcare delivery due to high administrative costs and problematic ties with insurance companies, which often prioritize profits over quality care.

The goal of 'Swasth Bharat' should be to embrace a holistic approach to health, which will naturally progress towards a 'Sampann Bharat' or a prosperous India. To realize this vision, there is a need for effective implementation of this scheme.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (SBM)

#SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, marked a historic step towards achieving nationwide sanitation and cleanliness. Now, with its 10-year anniversary coinciding with a significant report published in the Nature journal, the SBM's success in reducing infant and child mortality is validated. The mission, which aimed to eliminate open defecation across India, has left a profound impact on health, economy, and social dignity, particularly for women.

ABOUT SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (SBM)

- Ministry of Jal shakti launched Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBMG) in 2014. The mission was implemented as nation-wide campaign/Janandolan which aimed at **eliminating open defecation in rural areas during the period 2014 to 2019** through mass scale behaviour change, construction of household-owned and community-owned toilets and establishing mechanisms for monitoring toilet construction and usage.
- The **Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U)**, launched by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, on

2nd October 2014 aims at making urban India free from open defecation and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste in 4,041 statutory towns in the country.

- **SBM-U 2.0**, announced in Budget 2021-22, is the continuation of SBM-U first phase. The second phase of SBM-U aimed to go beyond ODF to ODF+, and ODF++, and focus on making urban India garbage-free.

OPEN DEFECATION FREE (ODF) STATUS

- ODF - An area is notified/declared as ODF if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open.
- ODF + - An area can be notified/declared as SBM ODF+ if at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating or urinating in the open and all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.
- ODF ++ - An area can be declared if it is having ODF+ status and entire faecal sludge/ septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas.

The SBM aimed to **change the behavior of 550 million people in just five years**. The mission called for the **construction of over 100 million household toilets**.

- What set the SBM apart was that it wasn't just a government **initiative but a jan andolan (mass movement)**. Through platforms like *Mann Ki Baat*. It inspired widespread community participation.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES OF SBM

- **Eradication of Open Defecation:** By October 2, 2019, **all Indian states declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF)**, achieving a significant milestone in the mission.
- **Reduction in Infant and Child Mortality:** A **scientific report published in Nature asserts** that the provision of toilets under the SBM saved 60,000–70,000 lives of children under five every year.
- **Health and Economic Benefits:** A UNICEF study estimated that **each ODF village household saved approximately ₹50,000 annually by avoiding medical expenses and time wasted due to sanitation-related illnesses**. Diarrhoea, one of the leading health issues due to poor sanitation, saw a sharp decline.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- **Dignity and Security for Women:** The **availability of household toilets provided greater dignity and security for women**, reducing the risks they faced when defecating in the open.

GLOBAL IMPACT AND RECOGNITION

- **International Attention:** The SBM garnered global attention and set an example for sanitation reform in developing countries. **In October 2018, the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention hosted 55 Health and Sanitation Ministers, including the United Nations Secretary General.**
- **Clean Nigeria Campaign:** Inspired by the SBM, Nigeria's Minister for Water and Sanitation launched the **Clean Nigeria Campaign**, applying lessons from India's experience.
- **Delhi Declaration:** The **four Ps outlined in the SBM were enshrined in the Delhi Declaration**, now recognized globally as vital elements for successful developmental programs.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SBM'S SUCCESS: THE FOUR PS

- **Political Leadership:** Prime Minister Modi's personal involvement and leadership were crucial in driving the mission's success.
- **Public Financing:** Massive investments in building infrastructure for sanitation, particularly toilets, were critical to achieving ODF status.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborative efforts between various government bodies, non-profits, and private organizations helped in implementing the SBM effectively.
- **People's Participation:** Community-led initiatives, such as *gaurav yatras* (pride tours) to celebrate ODF villages, generated healthy competition between communities, inspiring others to achieve ODF status.

CHALLENGES TO THE SWACHH BHARAT MISSION

1. **Sustainability of Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status:** Once villages, blocks, or districts are declared ODF, there is often a lack of continuous monitoring and follow-up activities, as the administrative focus shifts away after the initial achievement.
2. **Emphasis on Quantity Over Quality:** There is an overemphasis on the number of toilets constructed rather than ensuring proper functionality, usage, and

maintenance. This leads to gaps in addressing the real needs of communities.

3. **Overreporting of Toilet Construction:** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India highlighted instances of inflated reports on the number of toilets constructed, making it difficult to assess the true progress of the mission.
4. **Contradictory Reports on ODF Status:** Discrepancies exist between the government's claims and reports from independent agencies on the actual status of ODF regions, creating confusion about the mission's effectiveness.
5. **Inadequate Monitoring and Verification:** Government data shows that only 14% of constructed toilets have undergone a second round of verification, leading to concerns about whether the infrastructure is being used properly.
6. **Cultural and Usage-Related Barriers:** There are significant challenges in changing cultural mindsets around sanitation, especially in rural areas. Issues include:
 - Small, poorly designed toilets that are not user-friendly.
 - Social stigmas surrounding the cleaning of pit toilets, especially the issue of manual scavenging. Despite being officially banned, manual scavenging continues to exist, with unofficial reports suggesting 13 lakh manual scavengers are still active. The Dalit community is disproportionately affected, and there has been insufficient progress in rehabilitating them.
 - Resistance from men in certain communities to use toilets.
 - **Deep-rooted caste and religious practices** continue to influence who uses toilets and who doesn't. These social factors hinder behavioural change, leading many people to still prefer open defecation despite having access to operational toilets.
7. **Manual Scavenging and Social Injustice:**
8. **Insufficient Sewage Treatment:** The lack of adequate sewage treatment facilities results in untreated waste becoming a major environmental hazard, negating the benefits of toilet construction.
9. **Water Scarcity:** The availability of water is critical for the continued use of toilets. In many rural areas, inconsistent water supply leads to the discontinuation of toilet usage, pushing people back to open defecation.

WAY FORWARD**1. Technological Innovations in Sanitation:**

- Implement decentralized sewage treatment plants, as seen in Devanahalli, and other smart waste management technologies.
- Explore innovations like underground waste bins, automated cleaning systems, and smart monitoring for public toilets.
- Promote mechanized sweeping and advanced waste processing to enhance urban cleanliness.

2. Behaviour Change and Public Awareness:

- Continue to focus on behaviour change communication (BCC) to promote hygienic toilet use, regular handwashing, and litter prevention.
- Leverage **the success of initiatives like Poshan Abhiyan**, where community involvement in health campaigns boosted awareness. Similarly, engage youth, school children, and women to instill a culture of cleanliness.

3. Expanding Toilet Coverage in Public Spaces:

- Increase coverage of toilets in public spaces, such as bus stops, parks, and slum areas, using customizable, prefabricated models for quick installation.
- Draw lessons from the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**, which focuses on housing for all, to ensure sanitation facilities are incorporated into housing developments, particularly in underserved areas.

4. Integration with Other Schemes:

- Align SBM with **Jal Jeevan Mission** for a comprehensive approach to water and sanitation. Ensuring access to both safe drinking water and proper sanitation will lead to healthier communities.
- Combine efforts with **Ayushman Bharat** to focus on preventive healthcare by reducing waterborne diseases through improved sanitation and hygiene.

5. Strengthening Urban Local Bodies (ULBs):

- Enhance the capacity of ULBs to efficiently manage waste through scientific methods of collection, segregation, transportation, and processing.
- Support ULBs in expanding their infrastructure for waste management through initiatives like **Smart Cities Mission**, which promotes smart solutions to urban challenges.

6. Solid Waste Management and Recycling:

- Develop infrastructure for solid waste processing, including bio-methanation plants, composting units, and material recovery facilities.
- Promote waste segregation at source and incentivize recycling practices through educational campaigns and programs such as **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)**.
- Integrate circular economy principles by encouraging reuse, recycling, and sustainable disposal of waste.

7. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Community Engagement:

- Foster public-private partnerships to develop innovative, localized models for waste management and sanitation, ensuring these solutions are tailored to community needs.
- Programs like **Ujjwala Yojana**, which provided cooking gas to low-income households, demonstrated the effectiveness of involving both the government and private sector. Similarly, SBM can leverage such collaborations for sanitation projects.

8. Monitoring and Maintenance of Public Toilets:

- Improve the maintenance of public toilets through robust monitoring systems, citizen oversight, and social audits, similar to mechanisms used in the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)**.
- Introduce digital platforms to track the functionality and cleanliness of sanitation facilities in real time.

9. Community Involvement and Incentive Programs:

- Encourage communities to take ownership of sanitation projects through recognition schemes like **Nirmal Gram Puraskar**, which rewards villages for achieving ODF (Open Defecation Free) status.
- Engage local leaders, NGOs, and community groups to foster sustained behavior change and support for sanitation projects.

10. Incentivizing Waste Segregation and Circular Economy Practices:

- Introduce incentives for waste segregation and recycling through policy reforms and awareness campaigns that promote the principles of a circular economy.
- Partner with schools and educational institutions to integrate waste management education into curriculums, fostering a sense of responsibility among younger generations.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

CONCLUSION: The Swachh Bharat Mission is a prime example of how bold political leadership, effective financing, strategic partnerships, and active citizen participation can lead to transformational societal change. With its vast scale, significant health and economic impacts, and global recognition, the SBM stands as a model for large-scale developmental programs. However, continued efforts are necessary to sustain its achievements, especially in behavior change and waste management. As India moves forward, the lessons learned from SBM will continue to inspire not just national, but global sanitation and development efforts.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #WELFARE MECHANISM #MAINS
EXHAUSTIVE

PRIMARY
SOURCE

BusinessLine

Social capital in today's world has emerged as a transformative force. The jobs situation, economic disparities and environmental degradation necessitate a re-evaluation of traditional business models.

ABOUT SOCIAL CAPITAL

- It refers to the **connections among individuals' social networks** and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. It is closely related to **civic virtue but emphasizes the importance of social networks in making these virtues effective.**
- It is often described as the **"glue" that holds society together**, consisting of trust, mutual understanding, shared values, and behaviours that enable cooperative actions.
- It allows a group of people **to work together effectively to achieve a common purpose or goal.**
- These rely on voluntary action and may require external funding for expansion.
- In India, social capital is **evident in various community-driven initiatives and traditional practices.**
- **Self-help groups (SHGs)**, especially among rural women, foster economic empowerment and collective bargaining.

- **The Panchayat system strengthens** local governance by promoting participation and accountability. It is considered a vital component in development theory. It helps explain why certain economic policies fail when social factors are not taken into account.
- **Handicraft-oriented cottage industries** rely heavily on strong community bonds, trust, and collaboration among artisans, where skills are passed down through generations, strengthening intra-community ties.
- India has a rich tradition of social capital, with collective social entrepreneurship evident since ancient times. The Maurya and Gupta empires saw the **emergence of community organizations like Sabhas and Village Councils.** These organizations played a significant role in fostering social and cultural nationalism.
- It plays a crucial role in **promoting inclusive growth**, particularly by involving the poor and marginalized in development processes.
- It broadens **government accountability, encourages compromise**, and fosters innovation in policy making. It also enhances the efficiency of public service delivery through the involvement of community groups like Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

ROLES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ORGANIZATIONS

- **Service role:** Non-profit organizations often lead the way in responding to public needs, functioning as a flexible mechanism to address critical problems.
- **Value guardian role:** These organizations act as value guardians in society, promoting individual initiative for the public good and fostering pluralism, diversity, and freedom.
- **Advocacy/social safety-valve role:** They mobilize public attention to societal problems and represent under-represented groups, thus preserving democracy.
- **Community building role:** Nonprofits create and sustain social cohesion through bonds of trust and reciprocity, essential for the functioning of a democratic society and a market economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL

- The 2nd ARC report suggests drafting a model law for Societies and Trusts, with changes to enhance independence, transparency, and dynamism in these institutions.

- There is a call for an independent accreditation agency for the voluntary sector and for exemptions in foreign contribution regulations for smaller organizations.
- The expansion of the SHG movement is recommended, particularly in financially underserved areas, with support from institutions like NABARD.

WHY WOMEN DON'T COME FORWARD TO REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

#ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN #VULNERABLE
SECTION #SOCIETY #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*Sexual harassment remains a pervasive issue across various professions, including academia, media, and corporate sectors. **Despite the existence of laws such as the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Act, 2013, women still hesitate to report such incidents.** A recent case involving a research scholar from a reputed university in Delhi **highlights the challenges women face in bringing forth their complaints.** This article delves into the **reasons behind the reluctance to report sexual misconduct and the systemic issues that exacerbate the problem.***

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN REPORTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

1. Delayed Action by Internal Committees

- Many institutions delay the **process of addressing sexual harassment complaints**, as seen in the case of the 29-year-old PhD scholar. Despite filing her complaint in May, the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) took action only in July, by which time the victim had already left the university.
- Victims often face **insensitivity and delays, discouraging them from pursuing their complaints further.**

2. Fear of Repercussions and Career Impact

- Victims of sexual harassment often **worry that reporting their experience will negatively affect their careers.** The PhD scholar mentioned that had the ICC acted promptly, she would not have felt the need to quit her PhD.

- Women fear that **filing a complaint could "complicate things," leading to retaliation or career setbacks.**

3. Character Assassination

- Many women **face personal attacks and character defamation** after they come forward. In one case from Jamia Millia Islamia, a student alleged sexual harassment by her professor, **only to face character assassination during the ICC proceedings.**
- These experiences often cause victims to **feel more vulnerable, leading them to avoid reporting in the first place.**

4. Lack of Trust in Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs)

- Although the PoSH Act mandates the establishment of ICCs in workplaces with 10 or more women employees, **many women do not trust these committees to act impartially or effectively.**
- Some women, like the Jamia student, **approach the police rather than the ICC because they fear the committee will not take their complaint seriously.**

5. Institutional Evasion of Responsibility

- Many organizations or institutions treat complaints with varying degrees of seriousness. **A human resources professional in Delhi noted that some companies dismiss less severe complaints, like inappropriate comments, and only act when incidents are deemed more serious.**
- Organizations may also make **the process of filing complaints intimidating by suggesting reconciliation rather than taking formal action,** which discourages victims from pursuing justice.

6. Insufficient Penalties and Oversight

- Although the PoSH Act prescribes **penalties for non-compliance**, such as fines or revocation of licenses, enforcement is weak. **Instances of organizations losing their licenses due to non-compliance are rare.**
- Most district authorities do not rigorously enforce adherence to the guidelines, with only basic checks conducted. **For example,** Gurgaon district offices have introduced more thorough questionnaires, but such practices are not uniformly followed across the country.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION
OF PoSH**

- **Stricter Monitoring and Accountability:** There should be government-mandated platforms that allow external ICC members to report inconsistencies and violations across organizations.
- **Improved Sensitivity and Timeliness of Responses:** Internal committees must be trained to respond to complaints sensitively and promptly to avoid driving victims away.

- **Ensuring Victim Protection and Transparency:** To encourage women to come forward, organizations need to ensure that victims are protected from retaliation and character assassination during the investigation process.

By addressing these systemic issues and fostering a culture of support and accountability, organizations and institutions can create safer environments where women feel empowered to report sexual misconduct without fear.

PRELIMS**FOOD ADULTERATION**

#SOCIAL JUSTICE

#HEALTH #INDEX AND REPORTS

**PRIMARY
SOURCE** **THE HINDU**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued a show-cause notice to a Tamil Nadu-based firm, which supplied ghee to the Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh, for allegedly providing substandard product to the temple.

ABOUT FOOD ADULTERATION

- It is the intentional or unintentional addition of substances to food that can make it harmful to consume. These substances, known as **adulterants**, can be added to increase the quantity, reduce the cost, or improve the appearance of food.

COMMON TYPES OF ADULTERANTS

- Milk is often adulterated with **water, detergent, fat, and even urea**.
- **Preservatives** such as nitrites (used in cured meats) and benzoates (used in soft drinks and pickles), lead to digestive issues and long-term health problems.
- Tea leaves are commonly mixed with similarly colored leaves, some of which are inedible.
- Cornstarch, sawdust, and flour are used as fillers in spices.
- **Antibiotics and hormones** such as estrogen and testosterone in meat and poultry to promote growth, but excessive consumption can lead to antibiotic resistance and hormone imbalances.

- Khoya is adulterated with paper, refined oil, and skimmed milk powder.
- Pesticides (like DDT and organophosphates) in fruits and vegetables, heavy metals like lead and mercury in seafood, and industrial pollutants in food packaging.
- **Foreign substances** such as insects, dirt, or other foreign substances can accidentally contaminate food during processing or storage.
- Arhar dal is usually adulterated with metanil yellow.

REASON BEHIND GHEE ADULTERATION

- **High price of milk fat:** Milk-derived fats from cow and buffalo milk cost around Rs 460-470 per kg, with ghee production and packaging raising the price to Rs 485-495 per kg. This high cost incentivizes adulteration to cut production expenses.
- **Price differential between milk and vegetable fats:** Vegetable fats, such as refined palm, soybean, sunflower, and rapeseed oils, are significantly cheaper, ranging from Rs 120-150 per kg. The vast price difference between milk fats and vegetable fats encourages manufacturers to mix the latter into ghee to increase profits.
- **Scarcity of milk fat:** Milk fat is relatively scarce, as dairies prioritize selling liquid milk and producing other products like curd and lassi. Only limited availability of milk is available for the manufacture for production of ghee, further increases its value and drives adulteration.
- **Profit motive of dairies:** Large dairy cooperatives and private players prefer selling ghee in retail consumer packs rather than in bulk, as it fetches higher profits. Some dairies also use milk fat for ice cream production,

which offers better returns. This reluctance to sell ghee in bulk pushes organizations to seek cheaper, often adulterated, alternatives.

- **Lower demand and competition:** Sales of ghee from companies like Patanjali have decreased significantly in recent years, putting additional pressure on manufacturers to cut costs, potentially through adulteration.

LAWS DEAL WITH FOOD ADULTERATION

- **Under Indian Constitution**, the adulteration of foodstuffs and other items falls in the **Concurrent List**.
- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:** It is a comprehensive legislation dealing with various aspects with respect to the regulation of food safety.
- Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) is established under Section 4 of the Act to supervise and regulates food safety and standards.
- It prohibits any person to operate any food business without a license.
- The law prohibits producing, selling, and distributing contaminated or counterfeited foods.
- The Act also imposes a penalty for the possession of adulterant.
- **The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** Impose penalties, including imprisonment and fines, for food adulteration, with stricter punishments for hazardous food practices.

ABOUT FSSAI

Body: Statutory body has been established under Food Safety and Standards, 2006. It works as an independent authority and attained a special status. The FSS Act took 7 older acts into one umbrella.

- Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
- Fruit Products Order, 1955
- Meat Food Products Order, 1973
- Vegetable Oil Products (Control) Order, 1947
- Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order 1998
- Solvent Extracted Oil, De- Oiled Meal and Edible Flour (Control) Order, 1967
- Milk and Milk Products Order, 1992
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation.

- **Headed by:** Non-executive chairperson, appointed by the Central Government, either holding or has held the position of not below the rank of Secretary.
- **Objective:** To establish a single reference point for all matters relating to food safety and standards, by moving from multi- level, multi- departmental control to a single line of command.
- **Function:**
 - Framing of regulations to lay down food safety standards
 - Laying down guidelines for accreditation of laboratories for food testing
 - Providing scientific advice and technical support to the Central Government
 - Contributing to the development of international technical standards in food
 - Collecting and collating data regarding food consumption, contamination, emerging risks, etc.
 - Disseminating information and promoting awareness about food safety and nutrition in India.

PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATIYA UNNAT GRAM ABHIYAN(PMJUGA)

#SCHEME #SOCIAL JUSTICE #TRIBALS
#VULNERABLE GROUP

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The Union Cabinet recently approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PMJUGA), a comprehensive package aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal households across India.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATIYA UNNAT GRAM ABHIYAN

- **Purpose:** To improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts by adopting saturation coverage.
- **Total Outlay:** ₹79,156 crore (Central Share: ₹56,333 crore; State Share: ₹22,823 crore).
- **Beneficiaries:** Over 5 crore tribal people across 549 districts and 2,740 blocks in 30 States/UTs.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- **Saturation of Critical Gaps:** Focus on gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood.
 - **Housing:** Construction of 20 lakh pucca houses for eligible Scheduled Tribe (ST) households under PMAY-Gramin.
 - **Infrastructure:** Construction of 25,000 km of roads to connect tribal-majority villages, installation of off-grid solar power for unelectrified households, and providing piped water to eligible villages.
 - **Healthcare:** Set up 1,000 mobile medical units, build 2,000 new Anganwadi centers, upgrade 6,000 others, and establish facilities for diagnosing sickle cell disease.
 - **Education:** Increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio by setting up hostels, upgrading tribal schools, and ensuring access to quality education.
 - **Economic Empowerment:** Promote sustainable agricultural practices for 22 lakh FRA patta holders and create 100 Tribal Multipurpose Marketing Centers (TMMCs) to market tribal products.
 - **Tourism:** Develop 1,000 homestays in tribal villages with tourism potential, providing financial support of ₹5 lakh per new construction and ₹3 lakh for renovations.

KEY FEATURES

1. **Mapping on PM Gati Shakti Portal:**
 - Tribal villages will be mapped, and gaps will be identified for specific scheme requirements.
 - Progress will be monitored via the PM Gati Shakti platform.
 - Best-performing districts will receive awards.
2. **Focus on Aspirational Blocks:**
 - **Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP):** Targets the most underdeveloped blocks (500 blocks across 27 states and 4 Union Territories).
 - **Note:** The total coverage includes tribal villages beyond these aspirational blocks.
3. **Implementation and Monitoring:**
 - **17 Ministries Involved:** The mission encompasses 25 interventions led by 17 ministries, ensuring coordinated efforts to meet the scheme's goals.

- **Time-Bound Execution:** Ministries will utilize funds from the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) over the next 5 years.

STATE FOOD SAFETY INDEX 2024

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #HEALTH #INDEX AND REPORTS
#PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY
SOURCE

The Indian
EXPRESS

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Jammu & Kashmir were ranked as the top three performers on the **State Food Safety Index 2024**.

**KEY FINDINGS OF STATE FOOD SAFETY INDEX 2024:**

- Kerala has, for the second time in a row, topped the sixth State Food Safety Index (SFSI) 2024 and has achieved more than 100 per cent of its inspections target in FY24, improved its food-testing infrastructure and organised special drives to increase the number of license-holders and registrations, among other achievements.
- Tamil Nadu has got a "significant number of full-time designated food safety officers.
- Jammu and Kashmir got third position in the Index while Gujarat secured fourth position in the Index.
- Nagaland was given special acknowledgement among the northeastern states as the index said that the hilly state showed overall progress in improving the food safety ecosystem compared to the previous year.
- Eat Right campaign, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, and the promotion of millets as important initiatives the centre took to ensure safe and good food.

ABOUT STATE FOOD SAFETY INDEX (SFSI)

- **Released by:** Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- **Released on:** June 7 on the occasion of World Food Safety Day.

- **1st report:** Since 2019.
- **Parameters:** Human resources and institutional data , compliance, food testing infrastructure, training and capacity building, and consumer empowerment. In the 2023 index, a new parameter 'Improvement in SFSI Rank' was added
- **Objective:** To foster healthy competition and catalyse positive change in the food safety ecosystem throughout the country, ultimately ensuring the provision of safe and wholesome food to all residents.

ABOUT FSSAI

Body: Statutory body has been established under Food Safety and Standards , 2006. It works as an independent authority and attained a special status. The FSS Act took 7 older acts into one umbrella.

- Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
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- Collecting and collating data regarding food consumption, contamination, emerging risks, etc.
- Disseminating information and promoting awareness about food safety and nutrition in India.

TAMIL NADU CM M.K. STALIN CRITICIZES CENTRE FOR WITHHOLDING EDUCATION FUNDS

#EDUCATION #SOCIAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY SOURCE | THE HINDU

*In a bold statement on September 9, 2024, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin accused the central government of withholding funds from high-performing states like Tamil Nadu. He argued that the denial of funds stems from states' refusal to implement the controversial **National Education Policy (NEP)** rather than their performance in education outcomes.*

MORE INFO

Impact on Education in Tamil Nadu: Tamil Nadu has consistently been a top-performing state in terms of education, with high literacy rates and well-implemented school programs. However, the state's refusal to adopt the NEP has put it at odds with the Centre. By withholding **Samagra Shiksha funds**, which are integral for educational improvement in public schools, the Centre may inadvertently be punishing the very states that are already demonstrating success.

This clash between the state and central governments showcases the larger debate in India regarding federalism and the balance of power in policymaking, especially in sectors as crucial as education.

ABOUT THE SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME**What is Samagra Shiksha?**

The Samagra Shiksha Scheme is a comprehensive initiative launched by the Government of India to improve school education. It aims to provide equitable and inclusive quality education from **pre-primary to Class XII**, ensuring holistic development in schools across the country.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

KEY FEATURES OF SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME

- **Objective:** provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students; Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in School Education; Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education; Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions; Promoting Vocationalisation of education; Support States in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009; and Strengthening and up-gradation of SCERTs/State Institutes of Education and DIET as a nodal agencies for teacher training.
- **Integration:** The scheme combines three prior schemes—**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)**, and **Teacher Education (TE)**.

KEY COMPONENTS

- **Infrastructure Support:** provides funds for developing school infrastructure, including building new classrooms, upgrading facilities, and providing essential learning materials.
- **Teacher Education:** The scheme focuses on improving the quality of teachers through professional development programs.
- **Learning Outcomes:** It places a strong emphasis on improving student learning outcomes and bridging gaps in access to education for marginalized groups.
- **Funding Mechanism:** The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is at present in the ratio of 90:10 for the 8 North-Eastern States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura and 3 Himalayan States viz. Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and 60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature. It is 100% centrally sponsored for Union Territories without Legislature.
 - The scheme also supports states in improving educational outcomes but now appears to be intertwined with the acceptance of other central initiatives like PM-SHRI.

SAMAGRA SHIKSHA FUND

- This fund is the financial backbone of the Samagra Shiksha scheme, aimed at providing comprehensive support to state governments for implementing educational initiatives.

- **Funds are shared between the Centre and states** and are crucial for the smooth functioning of schools, teacher training programs, and infrastructural improvements in education.
- Despite its importance, the fund's disbursement has been delayed, and some states have faced obstacles in accessing it due to conditions tied to the acceptance of additional central government schemes such as PM-SHRI.

KONDH TRIBE

#SOCIAL JUSTICE #ISSUES RELATED TO SCS & STS #PRELIMS NUGGETS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*Generations of **Dongria Kondh tribals in Odisha's Rayagada district** have not been to school because of the challenges of living in a hilly area in the forest.*

ABOUT KONDH TRIBE

- It is the **largest tribal group in the state of Odisha**. They are also designated Scheduled Tribe in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- They speak **Kui and Kuvi as their native languages**. They are most closely related to the Gondi language. Both are Dravidian languages and are written with the Odia script.
- Traditionally their religious beliefs were **syncretic combining totemism, animism, ancestor worship, shamanism and nature worship**.
- The tribe has a number of sub-tribes, such as, **the Dongria, Kovi, Kuttia, Languli, Penga, and Jharnia**.
- While many Khond have transitioned to rice cultivation, some groups, like the Kuttia Khond, continue to engage in slash-and-burn agriculture (**kondhs call it dongar chaas or podu chaas**)

ABOUT DONGRIA KHOND

- The Niyamgiri hills in Odisha are home to the **Dongria Khond, recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group**.
- They speak **Kui**, a Dravidian language, like other Kondh sub-groups.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- They are primarily **horticulturists, skilled in banana and turmeric cultivation.**
- The Dongria Kondhs have a strong animistic belief system, with a deep reverence for nature.
- They worship **Niyam Raja**, the deity of the Niyamgiri Hills, whom they consider their supreme god and protector.
- The Niyamgiri Hills are seen as the embodiment of Niyam Raja, and the tribe performs various rituals to honour this deity.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. With respect to the Dongria Kondh of India, consider the following statements:

1. They live mainly in the State of Uttarakhand.
2. They speak the Kui language.
3. They are classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. With respect to “the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PMJUGA)”, consider the following statements:

1. The funding for PMJUGA comes exclusively from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST).
2. It will be implemented in all the underdeveloped Aspirational Blocks in India.
3. Its physical and financial progress will be monitored through the PM Gati Shakti platform.

Which of the statements given above are incorrect?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Adulteration is the intentionally act of degrading the nature or quality of food.
2. Under the Indian Constitution, food adulteration falls under the Union List.
3. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q4. With reference to Ayushman Bharat - PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), consider the following statements:

1. It will provide a cover of up to Rs. 10 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
2. The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011).
3. PM-JAY is fully funded by the Government and cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Q5. With reference to the State Food Safety Index (SFSI), consider the following statements:

1. It is released by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
2. The aim of the index is to foster competition and drive positive changes in the food safety ecosystem across the country.

3. Human resources and institutional capacity, and consumer empowerment are among the parameters of this index.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** The rise in social media usage among children has led to global concerns about their online safety and well-being. Analyze the positive and negative impacts of social media on children. Also, suggest a comprehensive way forward to ensure a safer digital environment for children.
- Q2.** Transgender rights are fundamental human rights, reflecting the values of a just society. Discuss the major challenges faced by transgender individuals in India and outline the steps taken by the government to address these issues. Suggest further measures to ensure their full integration and equality in society.

Answers: 1-b, 2-a, 3-a, 4-d, 5-c

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) AND GS PAPER I & III (MAIN)

LA-NINA ONSET FROM SEPTEMBER 2024

#CLIMATOLOGY

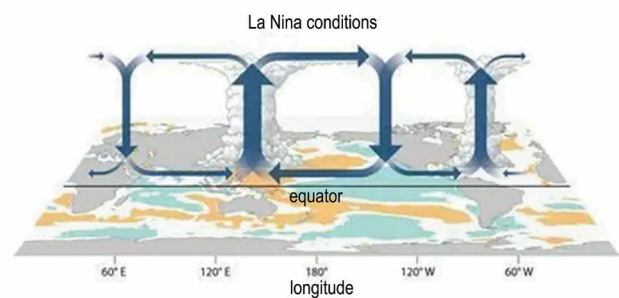
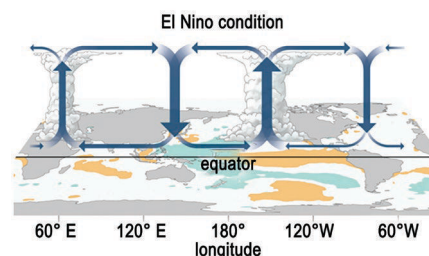
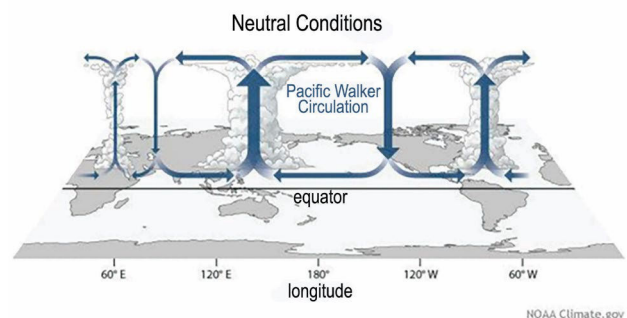
PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the onset of La Nina is expected to take place from September 2024 with the cooling of the Central Pacific Ocean. The La Nina is expected to result in heavy rainfall in September in several parts of North India.

IMPACT OF LA-NINA OF SEPTEMBER IN INDIA

- Starting mid-September, North India starts experiencing retreat of the Monsoons. However, the La Nina is likely to result in vigorous 'cyclonic activity' in the Bay of Bengal. The cyclonic activity will lead to several episodes of rain in the month.
- Since the monsoon rainfall is unequally distributed, the IMD predicts that many parts of Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Delhi are likely to see heavy rainfall.
- However, IMD did not predict the overall rainfall in the month. Weather models used by IMD to forecast rainfall over the next week or two have higher accuracy as compared to longer time frames like month or season. There is a need for the IMD for invest in higher order weather prediction models employing supercomputing power, global teleconnections and local systems.

ABOUT LA NINA



LA NIÑA

- La Niña basically refers to an abnormal cooling of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean waters off the coasts of Ecuador and Peru.

- Such cooling (sea surface temperatures i.e. SSTs falling) is a result of strong trade winds blowing west along the equator, taking warm water from South America towards Asia.
- The warming of the western equatorial Pacific, then, leads to increased evaporation and concentrated cloud-formation activity around that region, whose effects may spread to India as well.
- Atmospheric changes: La Nina events lead to higher pressure in the Central and Eastern Pacific (over western South America) and Lower Pressure over Western Pacific (Over Eastern Australia). This pressure gradient intensifies trade winds which pushes westward movement of warm water and strong upwelling of cold water in eastern Pacific (South America's Pacific Coast).
- Positive Feedback: There is a positive reinforcement between the atmospheric and ocean phenomena. This is evident as the stronger trade winds lead to increased upwelling and cooling of the Eastern Pacific region, which further strengthens trade winds.
- Usually La Nina events last for 9-12 months. However, they can prolong as well for about two years.

IMPACT OF LA NINA IN INDIA

- La Nina events usually lead to warming of the Indian Ocean, particularly the Western Indian Ocean region due to changes in wind patterns. This also leads to reduced upwelling in the region to leading to reduced fisheries catch.
- **Monsoon Enhancement:** Usually La Niña events lead to strengthening of monsoons in India leading to more rainfalls.
- **Boost for Agricultural:** An enhanced monsoon can benefit agriculture, especially in regions where rainfed agriculture is practiced. More rainfall can lead to higher crop yields or may be one more cycle of farming leading to higher incomes for farmers and food security.
- **Flood Risks:** Increased rainfall can also result in flooding events in low-lying areas leading to damage to life & property.
- **Winter Temperatures:** During La Niña years, northern India may experience colder winters. This is due to a stronger high-pressure system over Central Asia, which can bring cold winds down into the northern plains of India.
- **Drought Mitigation:** La Niña conditions can help alleviate drought situations in regions experiencing

water scarcity, as the increased rainfall can replenish reservoirs, rivers, and groundwater levels.

IMPACT OF LA NINA

• **Global Variations:**

- **Australia:** During La Niña, Australia typically experiences wetter than average conditions, leading to increased rainfall and sometimes flooding in parts of the country.
 - **South America:**
 - La Niña can bring variable impacts to different parts of South America. In countries like Argentina and Brazil, it can lead to wetter conditions in some regions, benefiting agriculture with increased crop yields. However, in other areas such as parts of Bolivia and Paraguay, drought conditions may prevail, negatively impacting crop production.
 - **Upwelling along the Pacific Coast** of South America during La Nina brings cold deep nutrient rich water to the surface, promoting phytoplankton growth leading to boom in fish population in eastern Pacific.
 - **North America:** La Niña often results in a more active winter storm track across the northern United States and Canada, leading to increased snowfall and colder temperatures. Conversely, the southern United States tends to experience warmer and drier conditions, which can increase droughts risks in already arid regions like the southwestern states.
 - **Southeast Asia:** Countries like India, Indonesia and the Philippines may experience increased rainfall during La Niña events, affecting rice production and potentially causing flooding and landslides in vulnerable areas.
- ##### • **Economic Impact:**
- **Energy Sector:** La Niña can influence energy markets globally. For instance, in regions where La Niña results in increased hurricane activity, such as the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, disruptions to oil and gas production can occur, leading to fluctuations in energy prices.
 - **Commodities:** Agricultural commodities such as grains (corn, soybeans) and soft commodities (coffee, cocoa) can see price volatility due to changes in production caused by La Niña-induced weather patterns.

• **Social and Environmental Consequences:**

- Small island nations in the Pacific can be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of La Niña, including increased storm surges, coastal erosion, and damage to infrastructure due to intensified tropical cyclones.

• **Ecological Effects:**

- **Marine Ecosystems:** La Niña alters ocean temperatures and currents, affecting marine life distribution and productivity

• **Health Implications:**

- **Vector-Borne Diseases:** La Niña can influence the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Increased rainfall can create breeding grounds for mosquitoes, potentially leading to outbreaks in affected regions.

ON UNCOMMON CYCLONES IN THE ARABIAN SEA

#CLIMATOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE

THE HINDU

SECONDARY SOURCE

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

WHAT IS A TROPICAL CYCLONE?

A tropical cyclone is a type of low-pressure weather system that forms over tropical or subtropical waters. They are characterized by strong winds, heavy rainfall, and a low-pressure centre. Tropical cyclones are known by different names depending on their location, such as hurricanes in the Atlantic and north-eastern Pacific, Willy-willy in North West Australia, typhoons in the northwest Pacific, and cyclones in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean.

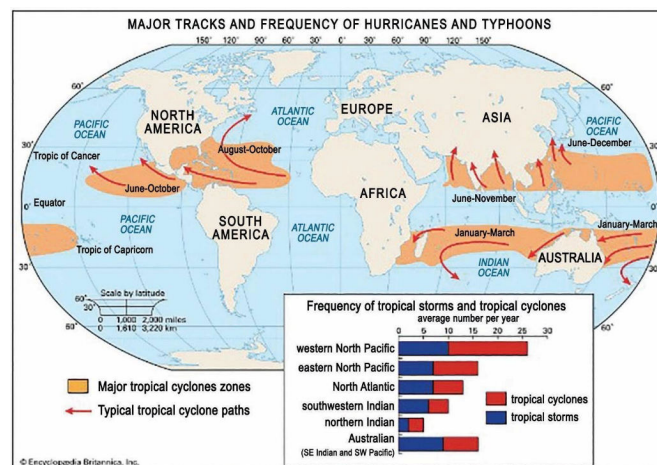
WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR THEIR FORMATION?

- **Warm water:** Tropical cyclones form over warm tropical or subtropical waters with a surface temperature of at least 26.5°C. Warmth of water provides energy needed to fuel the storm.
- **Moist air:** Tropical cyclones require moist air to form. Moisture provides fuel for thunderstorms that make up the storm.
- **Low wind shear:** it allows the storm to maintain its organization and strength. (High wind shear removes

the heat and moisture they need from the area near their center. Shear also distorts the shape of a hurricane by shearing it (blowing the top away from the lower portion), so that the vortex is tilted. A tilted vortex is usually a less efficient heat engine--the delicate balance of inflowing low-level winds and outflowing upper-level winds that ventilate the storm gets disrupted.)

- **A pre-existing weather disturbance:** Tropical cyclones typically form from pre-existing weather disturbances, such as an area of low pressure. These disturbances provide initial rotation and organization needed for a tropical cyclone to form.
- **Converging winds:** Tropical cyclones form in areas where winds are converging and rising, this allows for the development of thunderstorms and the low-pressure area that is the tropical cyclone.
- **Coriolis force:** It helps the wind to rotate. This is the reason that cyclones are not formed at the Equator.

It's worth noting that all these conditions have to be met and be in the right balance, otherwise it would lead to the tropical cyclone dissipating, or fail to form. Also, the storm needs to be in an environment where it can maintain its strength and not be disrupted by other weather systems or wind shear.



WHY TRADITIONALLY THE WEST INDIAN OCEAN EXPERIENCED LESS NUMBER OF TROPICAL CYCLONES?

The ratio between Arabian Sea (A.S) and Bay of Bengal (B.O.B) has been 1:4 in terms of yearly cyclones because of the following factors:

- Average temperature of B.O.B is higher than A.S. Relative shallowness of BOB and lower mixing of water on account of constant inflow of fresh water, makes it warmer.

- The trough formation in BOB is early, during mid may. This intensifies the low pressure system over BOB.
- Bay of Bengal has higher humidity and more moisture in the atmosphere due to the large river systems. This moisture helps sustain cyclonic systems. The Arabian Sea is drier, especially near the Arabian Peninsula.
- A.S has huge wind shear due to the presence of heterogeneous topography and high intensity SW monsoonal winds.
- B.O.B also experiences the offshoots of tropical cyclones from the Pacific-ocean. This linkage is known as 'Oceanic tunnels'. The Pacific tunnel brings a significant amount of warm water every year in the upper 500 m.

WHY MORE CYCLONES IN PRE AND POST MONSOON PERIOD?

- During the monsoon the strong south-westerly winds drive a strong evaporation and mixing of cold subsurface waters with the surface waters thereby lowering down the sea surface temperature.
- High vertical wind shear exists during monsoon which tends to strip off energy from any cyclone that may be trying to grow.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT ASNA?

- This is the first north Indian Ocean cyclone in Arabian sea in August since 1981.
- The depression that grew into this cyclone itself was unusual in terms of its powerful growth over land

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS IMPACTING TROPICAL CYCLONES?

According to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) India, in the last 50 years, has recorded a 12-fold surge in the number of associated cyclonic events such as extreme rainfall, floods, sea-level rise, and thunderstorms.

- **Increased sea surface temperature:** Over the past 50 years, the global ocean has absorbed 90% of the excess heat generated due to man-made climate change leading to higher convection and rapid intensification of cyclones. More heat is coming in from the Pacific Ocean now while the Southern Ocean is also pushing in warmer waters. The Indian Ocean is warming rapidly due to these inputs.

- **Rising sea level:** on account of Antarctic melting has increased the moisture availability for cyclones.
- **Micro-climatic changes on land:** Local heating of coastal land is pulled by adjacent ocean further heating it up.
- **Changing weather events:** El-Nino and rising marine heat waves lead to prolonged warm periods over oceans by reducing the ocean upwelling.
- **Higher Atmospheric moisture:** due to anthropogenic global warming increase cyclonic precipitation rates thereby increasing the frequency.
- **Changes in wind systems:** Occasionally intense winds drive the low-pressure regions to other areas, raising the frequency in those areas. Ex. Gulab cyclone shifted to Arabian sea from B.O.B

INDIA TO TACKLE LEAD POISONING

#POLLUTION

PRIMARY SOURCE BusinessLine

Lead poisoning is the one biggest threat to India with 275 million out of 800 million estimated to have high blood lead level (BLL) in 2020.

KEY POINTS ABOUT LEAD POISONING

- A 2023 Lancet report highlights that most children with high blood lead levels (BLLs) are in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- Lead poisoning often goes unnoticed as it can be asymptomatic at lower exposure levels, leading to denial among the public and policymakers.
- India has been studying lead exposure since the 1970s, **with significant findings linking higher BLLs to lower IQ scores in children.**
- India has **standards for lead content in products**, but **enforcement is inconsistent** and requires strengthening.

LEAD POLLUTION IN INDIA

It is ubiquitous and found in the air we breathe, the spices we cook, the toys our children play with, the paint on our walls and many more.

SOURCES OF LEAD POLLUTION

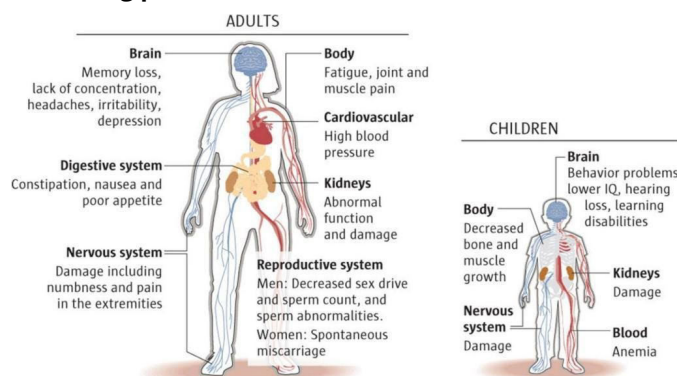
- **Industrial Emissions:** Lead is emitted into the air through various industrial processes such as mining, smelting, refining, and manufacturing of lead-based products like batteries, paints, and ceramics.
- **Automobiles:** Historically, leaded gasoline was a major source of lead emissions. While leaded gasoline has been phased out in many countries, vehicle emissions still contribute to lead pollution, particularly in areas with high traffic density.
- **Lead-Based Paints:** Lead-based paints, commonly used in buildings and infrastructure before regulations restricted their use, can deteriorate over time, releasing lead particles into the environment. This is a significant concern, especially in older homes and buildings.
- **Battery Recycling:** Improper recycling of lead-acid batteries, such as those used in cars and industrial equipment, can lead to the release of lead into the environment, particularly through soil and water contamination.
- **Industrial Waste and Landfills:** Improper disposal of industrial waste containing lead, as well as inadequate management of landfills, can result in leaching of lead into soil and groundwater, posing risks to nearby communities.
- **Lead Pipes and Plumbing Fixtures:** Lead pipes and plumbing fixtures, particularly in older homes and infrastructure, can leach lead into drinking water. Corrosion of these materials can increase lead levels in tap water, especially in areas with acidic water or inadequate water treatment.
- **Mining and Ore Processing:** Mining activities, particularly for lead and other metals, can release lead-containing dust and particles into the air and water, contaminating soil and aquatic ecosystems.
- **Smoking:** Tobacco smoke contains lead, and smoking in indoor environments can lead to the accumulation of lead dust on surfaces, contributing to indoor lead pollution.
- **Food and Water Contamination:** Lead can enter the food chain through contaminated soil, water, and air. Certain food items, particularly those grown in lead-contaminated soil or water, may contain elevated levels of lead.

- **Hobbies and Crafts:** Some hobbies and crafts involve the use of materials containing lead, such as stained glass making, pottery glazes, and ammunition reloading. Improper handling and disposal of these materials can lead to lead exposure.

MAGNITUDE OF THE ISSUE

A 2020 report by UNICEF estimated that nearly 27 crore Indian children have unsafe blood lead levels (BLLs).

- Unsafe concentration of lead in the body can deter their **neuro-cognitive development, leading to decreased IQ, behavioural problems, lowered educational achievement and eventually lowered earning potential.**

**CHALLENGES IN DETECTION AND DIAGNOSIS**

Lead poisoning is extremely difficult to diagnose given that it may be asymptomatic or manifest with unrelated symptoms like abdominal pain, constipation, and headaches.

- Unfortunately, there is no cure for lead poisoning. By the time it is diagnosed, the adverse impacts it has had on the child's brain and body are irreversible. Thus, the old adage, 'Pollution Prevention Pays' holds very true here.

ROLE OF TESTING AND SURVEILLANCE

Routine screening emerges as a vital tool in safeguarding children from lead exposure.

- **Venous blood tests offer** insights into lead levels, enabling timely interventions. While private diagnostic facilities offer individual testing, mass surveillance demands a cost-effective and efficient approach.

UTILIZING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

ICPMS India boasts a robust medico-scientific infrastructure equipped with state-of-the-art analytical instruments, notably the ICPMS.

- This advanced technology, available in academic institutions and research facilities nationwide, enables high-throughput lead testing with unparalleled accuracy and sensitivity.
- Leveraging this resource can revolutionize lead poisoning surveillance, fostering a comprehensive database akin to global standards.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS:

The NITI Aayog's commissioning of CSIR-NEERI to corroborate UNICEF's findings underscores the government's commitment to addressing lead poisoning.

- The establishment of the India Working Group on Lead Poisoning further signifies a concerted effort to combat this pervasive threat through research, advocacy, and policy interventions.

HARNESSING SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE FOR ACTION

Through collaborative endeavours and interdisciplinary cooperation, India possesses the capacity to combat lead poisoning effectively.

- The convergence of technical expertise, research endeavours, and policy advocacy underscores the nation's resolve to safeguard the health and well-being of its populace.

The fight against lead poisoning demands a multi-pronged approach, encompassing detection, prevention, and advocacy. With concerted efforts, leveraging advanced technology, and harnessing scientific expertise, India can mitigate the scourge of lead poisoning and secure a healthier future for its children.

A FRESH LOOK AT WATER POLICY – WATER GOVERNANCE

#ENVIRONMENT

**PRIMARY
SOURCE**

BusinessLine

**SECONDARY
SOURCE**

India
waterportal

2019 Mihir Shah-led Committee, constituted to draft the National Water Policy, submitted their report almost four years ago but still no actions have been taken.

WATER STRESS IN INDIA

- More than 40 per cent of India is arid and semi-arid with erratic and scanty rainfall.

- Water stress/scarcity situations impact lives and livelihoods in these regions.
- With climate change, the rainfall pattern is changing and water shortage is visible in many parts of the country.
- There are wide spatial and temporal variations in the distribution of water.
- A NITI Aayog study (2019) estimates that by 2050, water availability (supply) in India will reduce to half of the demand.

WHAT ARE THE PRESENT ISSUES IN WATER GOVERNANCE IN INDIA?

- Fragmented institutional network: multiple institutions like CWC, CGWB, state level agencies etc lead to poor coordination.
- Over reliance on structuralist interventions: like creation of dams, canals, reservoirs and barrages to manage water supply largely ignored social, environmental, and ecological impacts.
- Inefficient irrigation practices and excessive groundwater extraction.
- Inter-state water disputes, such as the Cauvery and Yamuna water-sharing conflicts
- Lack of decentralized approach in water management.
- Water is viewed as a free commodity and no monetary value is attached with it
- Ineffective implementation of laws related to waste water discharge.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MIHIR SHAH COMMITTEE

- **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM):** It proposed a **systems approach** to water, focusing on managing water resources sustainably within river basins and aquifers.
- **Creation of a National Water Commission (NWC)** to replace the existing Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) to combine both surface and groundwater management and focus on water governance.
- **Decentralized water management:** empowering local communities and stakeholders to take part in decision-making.
- **Water demand management:** a shift from supply-side interventions (like dam construction) to demand-side management like water-saving techniques in agriculture, industrial, and domestic sectors.

- **Data and Technology:** data collection, monitoring, related to water resources using modern technologies like remote sensing, GIS, and hydrological modelling and to create National Water Informatics Centre.

WATER PRICING

Water is considered as a non-economic good and this leads to its over exploitation and excessive wastage.

Water having an economic value:

- The UN Dublin Principle (1992) emphasised on the importance of economic value of water in general and irrigation water in particular.
- Domestic water and water for industries are charged, but irrigation water is considered a non-merit good, often supported by government funds.
- The National Water Policy (NWP) 1987 mandated that water rates should convey the scarcity value of the resource to users.

How should the water be valued?

Experts have found few inter related things in this regard:

- Valuing *in situ* water resources and ecosystems
- Valuing water infrastructure for water storage, use, reuse or supply augmentation
- Valuing water services, mainly drinking water, sanitation and related human health aspects
- Valuing water as an input to production and socio-economic activity, such as food and agriculture, energy and industry, and business and employment
- Other socio-cultural values of water, including recreational, cultural and spiritual attributes

What can be a way ahead?

- The NWP 2002 suggested that water rates should cover at least O&M cost initially and part of capital costs subsequently. (OECD countries levy uniform volumetric charges.)
- Subsidy on water rates should be well-targeted and transparent.
- There should be independent Water Regulatory Authorities (WRA) to fix the price in a consultative and transparent manner.
- There should be frequent revision of water rates. (In Kerala, for 47 years there were no changes in water rates.)

- Volumetric pricing system in the irrigation sector should be implemented. Incentives should be given for using water-efficient technologies such as drip/sprinkler irrigation in agriculture. A National Irrigation Water Policy should be framed after extensive deliberations with States.

WHAT FUTURE STEPS CAN BE TAKEN IN THIS REGARD?

National water policy 2020 is the latest document which gives us a way ahead

- Water should be understood as a dynamic component integral to the eco-hydrological cycle, rather than as a stock of resources to be exploited.
- Valuation of ecosystem services linked to water flow regimes must be done
- The river basin should be construed as the fundamental unit of governance.
- Water efficiency must be focussed by shifting towards adopting water-saving methods.
- A comprehensive assessment of water development projects is necessary, considering the integrity of the hydrological cycle.
- Droughts and floods are not extreme events, but integral components of the global eco-hydrological cycle.
- Gender considerations are critical, as emphasised in the Dublin Statement, which recognises that “women play a central role in the provision, management, and safeguarding of water”.

DE-HYPHENATING RICE – WHEAT

#INDIAN AGRICULTURE

PRIMARY
SOURCE The Indian
EXPRESS

Wheat is grappling with production challenges despite increasing consumption, while rice is experiencing a surplus issue, causing the two cereals to diverge significantly in their circumstances.

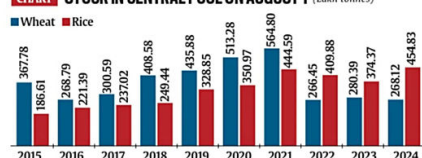
SCENARIO OF WHEAT AND RICE PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF INDIA**Rice Surplus:**

- **Export Data:** India exported 21.21 million tonnes (mt) of rice in 2021-22, 22.35 mt in 2022-23, and 16.36 mt in 2023-24.

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- **Stock Levels:** As of August 1, 2024, rice stocks were at an all-time high of 45.48 mt.
- **Wheat Shortage:**
 - **Export Data:** Wheat exports fell from 7.24 mt in 2021-22 to 0.19 mt in 2023-24, with a ban on exports from May 2022.
 - **Stock Levels:** Central pool stocks of wheat on August 1, 2024, were at 26.81 mt, the lowest in recent times.
- Usually, rice stocks are below that of wheat at this time of the year.
- This is because wheat is harvested and marketed during April-June, whereas the main kharif rice crop comes in only from October.
- The last three years have been unusual, with rice stock levels on August 1, at the tail-end of the crop marketing year, being higher than that of wheat.

CHART STOCK IN CENTRAL POOL ON AUGUST 1 (Lakh tonnes)



*Includes rice equivalent of un-milled paddy lying with Food Corporation of India and State agencies.
Source: Department of Food and Public Distribution.

TABLE 2 TOP WHEAT PRODUCERS (million tonnes), All-India: 109.73*

Uttar Pradesh	34.46	Rajasthan	10.69
Madhya Pradesh	20.96	Bihar	6.32
Punjab	16.85	Gujarat	3.42
Haryana	11.37	Maharashtra	2.07

Note: Figures are average of five years from 2019-20 to 2023-24; *Includes production from other states.
Source: Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

TABLE 1 TOP RICE PRODUCERS (million tonnes)

West Bengal	15.95
Uttar Pradesh	15.64
Punjab	12.97
Telangana	12.51
Odisha	8.97
Chhattisgarh	8.29
Andhra Pradesh	7.92
Bihar	7.13
Tamil Nadu	6.92
Madhya Pradesh	5.59
Assam	5.03
Haryana	4.99
Karnataka	3.96
Maharashtra	3.53
Jharkhand	2.41
Gujarat	2.22

All-India: 129.03*

CHART: Stock in Central Pool on August 1; Top wheat producers; Top rice producers

PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS

- **Rice:**
 - **Geographical Spread:** Cultivated across 16 states including Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and others. Grown in both rabi and kharif season
 - **Water Dependency:** Limited primarily by water availability, with Telangana significantly increasing its rice output due to improved irrigation and support prices.
- **Wheat:**
 - **Geographical Concentration:** Grown mainly in eight states, with the top four states (UP, MP, Punjab, Haryana) contributing over 76% of the output. Wheat has a single rabi cropping season.

- **Climate Sensitivity:** Vulnerable to changing climate conditions such as shorter winters and fluctuating temperatures, affecting production.

DIVERGENCE IN CONSUMPTION: WHEAT VS. RICE

- **Wheat Consumption Trends:** Current Consumption Levels:
 - Rural India: 3.9 kg per capita per month.
 - Urban India: 3.6 kg per capita per month.
 - Total Consumption: Approximately 65 million tonnes (mt) for a population of 1,425 million.
- **Forms of Wheat Consumption:**
 - Whole-Grain Flour (Atta): Used for basic bread items like roti, chapati, paratha, and poori, as well as dishes like upma and rava kesari.
 - Semi-Processed Flour (Sooji/Rava): Coarse flour used in various dishes.
- **Processed Wheat Products:**
 - **Maida:** Refined flour produced from wheat that has been stripped of its bran and germ.
 - **Production:** Involves grinding the endosperm of the wheat grain, filtering, and bleaching.
 - **Uses:** Key ingredients in bakery products (bread, buns, biscuits, cakes), convenience foods (sandwiches, noodles, pasta, pizza, momos, pav-bhaji), and sweetmeats (gulab jamun, jalebi).
 - **Characteristics:** Known for its fine texture, softness, and longer shelf life, but lacks dietary fiber, minerals, B vitamins, and proteins.

- **Consumption Trends:**
 - **Increasing Use of Processed Wheat:** With rising incomes and urbanization, the consumption of wheat in processed forms like maida is growing.
 - **Data Gaps:** Exact figures for processed wheat consumption are not available, but the trend indicates a significant increase.
- **Rice Consumption Trends:** Current Consumption:
 - **Limited Innovation:** Processing and convenience food innovations for rice have been relatively minimal.
 - **Common Products:** Includes traditional dishes such as idli, dosa, murukku, puffed rice (murmura), puddings, and biryani.
- **Consumption Dynamics:**

- **Less Diversification:** Unlike wheat, rice has not seen significant growth in processed forms or new food products.
- **Wheat:** Increasing consumption, especially in processed forms like maida, driven by rising incomes and urbanization. Consumption is significant both in traditional whole-grain forms and processed products.
- **Rice:** Consumption remains stable with limited diversification into processed products and convenience foods.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- **Wheat Policy Considerations:** Current Consumption Patterns:
 - **South India:** Wheat is a staple, consumed in some form at least once daily.
 - **North India:** Rice has not become as prevalent as wheat in South India.
- **Processing Infrastructure:**
 - **Roller Flour Mills (RFMs):**
 - Quantity: Approximately 1,500 RFMs.
 - Capacity: Process 50 to 500 tonnes of wheat per day into products like maida, sooji/rava, bran, and germ.
- **Stone Chakkis:**
 - Quantity: Numerous roadside and around 700 organized stone chakkis.
 - Capacity: Grind 50 to 300 kg of wheat per hour to produce whole atta flour.
- **Future Outlook:**
 - **Short-Term:** India may need to become a wheat importer due to rising consumption and production challenges.
 - **Long-Term Strategy:**
 - Improve Yields: Focus on increasing per-acre wheat yields.
 - Develop Climate-Smart Varieties: Breed wheat varieties that can withstand changing climate conditions.

- **Rice Policy Considerations: Current Production vs. Consumption**
 - **Production:** High levels of rice production.
 - **Consumption:** Domestic consumption does not match the production levels, leading to surplus.
- **Export Restrictions:**
 - **Export Ban:** Current ban on exports of white non-basmati rice should be lifted.
 - **Duties and Floor Prices:**
 - Parboiled Non-Basmati Rice: Remove the 20% duty.
 - Basmati Rice: Eliminate the \$950/tonne floor price on shipments.
- **Stock Management:**
 - **Action Required:** Immediate policy changes are needed to prevent unmanageable excess stocks.
- **Wheat:** Requires a shift in policy to address rising consumption and production issues, including improving yields and adapting to climate change. The trend suggests **India** may need to import wheat soon.
- **Rice:** Needs policy adjustments to manage surplus, including lifting **export** bans and duties to balance production and consumption.

GLOBAL SOLAR FACILITY (GSF)

#RENEWABLE ENERGY #PRELIMS NUGGETS

**PRIMARY
SOURCE****BusinessLine**

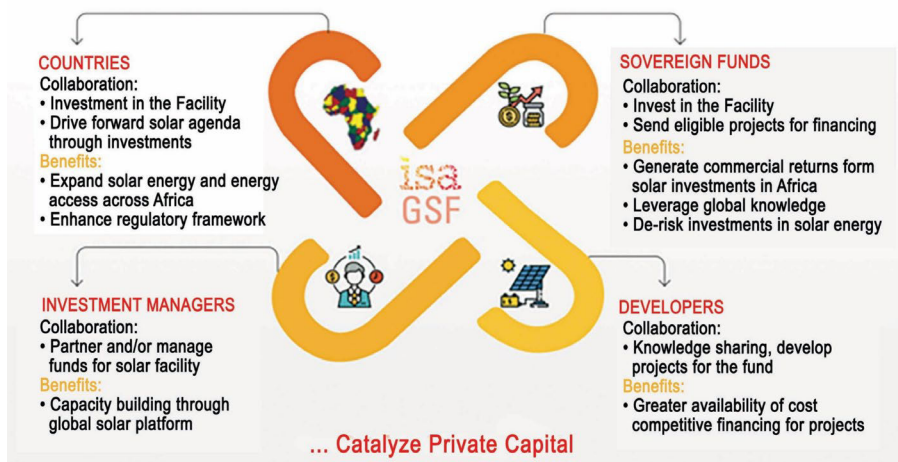
*The International Solar Alliance (ISA) will launch a \$100 million fund, **Global Solar Facility**, that will help catalysing up to \$1.5 billion in funding to expand decentralised solar power capacities across the least developed countries in Africa, where more than 700 million people have no access to electricity.*

ABOUT GLOBAL SOLAR FACILITY (GSF)

- It is a **payment guarantee mechanism** created by **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** to stimulate investments in solar power projects.

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- It aims to catalyse solar investments **across the world, starting with Africa's underserved segments** and geographies, thereby unlocking **commercial** capital.



- It will primarily focus on **decentralised solar solutions, rooftop solar, and productive use solar**.
- Through this financing vehicle, which includes payment guarantees, insurance and investment funds, the ISA aims to mitigate project risks, provide technical assistance to address regulatory gaps, reduce currency risks, resolve contractual and **financial** uncertainties in the solar energy sector.
- In 2022, the ISA Assembly approved the creation of a Global Solar Facility (GSF) in Africa, which was **announced at COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh**.
- After **Africa**, the GSF aims to expand to **regions such as Asia, Latin America and the Middle East**, where the Regional Facilities will be tailored to meet specific requirements.
- In future, the GSF will invest in innovative technologies to enhance solar energy efficiency, support startups for faster solar energy implementation, and explore emerging solar energy sectors.

licensees and leaseholders pay the DMF a certain amount of the royalty.

PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION TILL NOW

- DMF has received a corpus of almost ₹1 lakh crore through which decentralised community-centric development works are carried out in mining affected districts.
- Three lakh projects being sanctioned across 645 districts.
- DMF has been instrumental in setting up of women led SHGs in different states for example Odisha.
- Some DMFs are ensuring inclusivity by including elected representatives in the governing bodies while some have non-elected members of gram sabhas as well.
- Some DMFs have also adopted measures such as establishing a dedicated engineering department and deputing personnel from the State Public Works Department to ensure the efficient implementation of projects.

ABOUT DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION

- Established under Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) (MMDR) Act, in 2015 in all the districts affected by mining.
- Accordingly, Section 9(B) of the MMDR Act provides for the establishment of DMF as a non-profit body.
- The objective of the District Mineral Foundation is to work for the interest and benefit of persons, and areas affected by mining related operations.

DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION

#PRELIMS NUGGETS #MINING

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

In 2015, the Narendra Modi government amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act mandating auctions. As a part of the Bill, the government created a new body in the form of a District Mineral Foundation (DMF) where

- State Government shall, by notification, establish a trust, as a non-profit body, to be called the District Mineral Foundation.
- The composition and functions of the District Mineral Foundation shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government.
- The holder of a mining lease or a prospecting licence-cum-mining lease granted on or after the date of commencement of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015, shall share some amount of royalty with DMF.

REVIVING DISTRICT AGRO-METEOROLOGY UNITS (DAMUs)

#AGRICULTURE, #CLIMATOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

PTI reported that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is planning to revive District Agro-Meteorology Units (DAMUs) under the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme.

ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE

- IMD set up 199 DAMUs in 2018 in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- Aim: Use weather data to prepare and disseminate sub-district level agricultural advisories.

FUNCTIONS OF DAMUs

- Staffed by meteorologists and agricultural experts.
- Utilized IMD weather data (rainfall, temperature, wind speeds) to create advisories.
- Provided guidance on sowing, harvesting, fertilizer and pesticide use, and irrigation.
- Delivered advisories in local languages twice a week through text messages, WhatsApp groups, newspapers, and in-person communication.
- Offers early warnings for extreme weather events like droughts and heavy rainfall.

IMPACT ON FARMERS

- Benefitted small and marginal farmers, who represent around 80% of India's farming community.

- Helped farmers plan agricultural activities and manage risks associated with climate variability and extreme weather.
- Contributed to building climate resilience among the farming community.

CLOSURE OF DAMUs

Reasons for Shutdown

- NITI Aayog misrepresented DAMUs' role and sought privatisation.
- Claimed that agro-met data was automated, undermining the work of DAMU staff.
- Suggested monetisation of advisory services, contrary to the free-of-cost model.
- Reports indicated a lack of understanding about the role of DAMU staff and the benefits of the GKMS scheme.

Reactions and Concerns

- February 2024: Gujarat-based Association of Agrometeorologists expressed deep concern about the shutdown, emphasizing DAMUs' role in climate resilience.
- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari also advocated for the continuation of DAMU services.

PRIVATE SECTOR ALTERNATIVES

Current Landscape

- Few private players offer weather advisory services.
- Concerns about affordability for small and marginal farmers.

Challenges with Private Services

- High costs: ₹10,000 per crop annually, with some subscriptions reaching ₹60,000-80,000.
- Potential biases in recommendations, such as preferences for certain brands of fertilizers and pesticides.

WAY FORWARD

Revival Plans

- IMD is considering reviving DAMUs under the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme to continue supporting farmers effectively.

CONTINUATION OF PM-AASHA SCHEMES

#SCHEMES, #AGRICULTURE

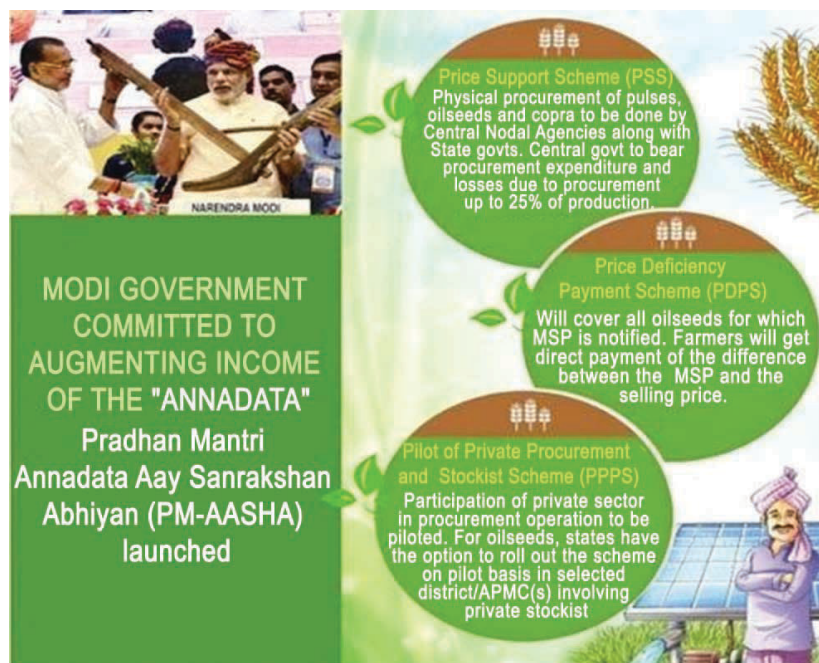
PRIMARY SOURCE 

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) schemes.

OBJECTIVE OF PM-AASHA

- Ensure remunerative prices for farmers.
- Control price volatility of essential commodities to benefit consumers.

FINANCIAL DETAILS



Budgetary Requirement:

- Total financial outgo for PM-AASHA: ₹35,000 crore during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (up to 2025-26).
- Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for rabi season (phosphatic and potassic fertilizers) set at a tentative budget of ₹24,475.53 crore.

COMPONENTS OF PM-AASHA

Converged Schemes:

- Price Support Scheme (PSS)
- Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)
- Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)
- Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES

Extension of PSF:

- Aims to protect consumers from extreme price volatility of agri-horticultural commodities.
- Involves maintaining a strategic buffer stock of pulses and onions for calibrated release.
- Discourages hoarding and speculation.
- Ensures affordable supply to consumers.

FERTILIZER SUBSIDY

Subsidy Assurance:

- Ensures availability of fertilizers to farmers at subsidized, affordable prices.
- Rationalization of subsidy on P and K fertilizers based on recent trends in international prices.

ISSB STANDARDS

#PRELIMSNUGGETS, #SUSTAINABILITY

PRIMARY SOURCE 

The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB, a part of IFRS Foundation) has issued two standards under the IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standard programme.

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- **Issuance:** The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), part of the IFRS Foundation, has released two standards:
 - **IFRS S1:** General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information.
 - **IFRS S2:** Climate-related Disclosures.
- **Objective of IFRS S1:**
 - Requires entities to disclose sustainability-related risks and opportunities affecting cash flows, access to finance, or cost of capital over various timeframes.
 - Aims to provide useful information to primary users of financial reports for resource allocation decisions.
 - Excludes risks and opportunities not expected to impact the entity's prospects.
- **Definition of Financial Information:**
 - Relates to critical factors affecting operations (e.g., water resource depletion impacts).
 - Appendix A defines sustainability-related financial disclosures.
 - Appendix D discusses qualitative characteristics of useful disclosures.
- **Influence from IASB:**
 - Draws on IASB accounting standards for definitions of 'Materiality' and 'Reporting Boundaries'.
 - Incorporates judgments in preparing disclosures, estimates, uncertainties, and error corrections.

COMPARISON WITH ESRS

- **ESRS Overview:**
 - Comparable standards for the EU, piloted by EFRAG, with collaboration from GRI.
 - Extends applicability beyond primary users to additional stakeholders.
- **Materiality Concepts:**
 - **ISSB:** Focuses on the financial impact of environmental factors.
 - **ESRS:** Employs a 'double materiality' approach, requiring disclosure of both financial impacts and environmental impacts of the entity.

CORE CONTENT OF ISSB STANDARDS

- Built around four key areas:

Governance: Management controls for monitoring risks and opportunities.

Strategy: Approaches for managing identified risks and opportunities.

Risk Management: Processes for assessing and prioritizing risks.

Metrics: Measurement and target-setting for goals.

- Influenced by the TCFD (Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Disclosures must align with financial statements covering the same period.
- Comparative information should be included.
- An explicit compliance statement is required.
- **Special Consideration (Paragraph 34):**
 - Entities must disclose the effects of sustainability-related risks on financial position, performance, and cash flows.
 - May complicate auditors' assessments regarding financial statement impacts.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENTS

In 2019, Nick Anderson highlighted that existing IFRS standards could support climate-related disclosures, but no framework existed for mandatory disclosures.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Concerns about interoperability among ISSB, ESRS, and the SEC standards (2024).
- Entities operating in multiple jurisdictions will need to meet varied reporting requirements.
- **Assurance Requirement:** Essential for credibility of disclosures.
- **Emerging Frameworks:** The TNFD (Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures) aims to shape future sustainability reporting standards.
- **Adoption Status:** ISSB standards not yet officially adopted in any jurisdiction, while ESRS is part of EU legislation.
- Current requirement in India: Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) by SEBI.
- **Endorsement:** In July 2023, the ISSB standards were endorsed by the International Organization for Security Councils, enhancing their global acceptability.
- **Momentum:** Developments in sustainability reporting are gaining significant traction.

The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) **was established in November 2021 during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow.** The ISSB's primary goal is to develop global standards for sustainability disclosures, ensuring that companies provide high-quality, comparable information on sustainability-related risks and opportunities.

KEY POINTS ABOUT THE ISSB

- **Global Baseline:** The ISSB aims to create a comprehensive global baseline of sustainability disclosures focused on the needs of investors and financial markets.
- **Support and Collaboration:** The ISSB's work is backed by major international bodies like the G7, G20, and the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO).
- **Integration of Existing Initiatives:** It builds on the work of existing initiatives such as the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB) and the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).
- **Leadership:** Emmanuel Faber is the first chair of the ISSB.
- The ISSB's standards are designed to be cost-effective, decision-useful, and market-informed, helping companies report necessary information globally to investors

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ANIIDCO)

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The qualifications of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation come into question after it got permission to do a ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar

OVERVIEW OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ANIIDCO)

- **Background**

- **Incorporation Date:** June 28, 1988, under the Companies Act.
- **Objective:** To develop and commercially exploit natural resources for balanced and environment-friendly development of the territory.
- **Main Activities:**
 - Trading of petroleum products, Indian-made foreign liquor, and milk.
 - Managing tourism resorts.
 - Infrastructure development for tourism and fisheries.

- **Current Major Project**

- **Project:** ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project in Great Nicobar.
- **Components:**
 - Trans-shipment port.
 - Greenfield airport.
 - Tourism and township project.
 - Solar and gas-based power plants.

- **Concerns and Issues**

- **Qualifications:** ANIIDCO's mandate, history, structure, and capabilities raise concerns about its suitability for such a high-profile project.
- **Environmental Governance:**
 - **Initial Status:** ANIIDCO did not have an environment policy or an environment cell when appointed as project proponent in July 2020.
 - **Human Resources:** Lacked the necessary expertise and human resources initially. Began recruiting relevant experts only in late 2022.
 - **Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) Concerns:**
 - ✓ EAC asked if ANIIDCO had a corporate environment policy, an administrative system for environmental compliance, and standard operating procedures for environmental and forest violations.
 - ✓ ANIIDCO admitted in August 2021 that it did not have an environmental policy.
 - ✓ Despite this, the EAC granted environmental clearance in November 2022.

- **Conflicts of Interest**

- **Forest Clearance Issue:**

- In 2022, Conservation Action Trust filed a petition before the National Green Tribunal challenging Stage 1 forest clearance.
- The petition highlighted that the managing director of ANIIDCO was also the Commissioner cum Secretary (Environment and Forests), creating a conflict of interest as ANIIDCO was essentially certifying its own project.
- **Evaluation and Oversight:**
 - Chief Secretary of the islands, also chairman of ANIIDCO's board of directors, was involved in evaluating the project and addressing complaints, which raised concerns about self-evaluation.
 - Numerous ANIIDCO staff are also civil servants handling environmental and tribal welfare issues.
- **Past Administrators' Views**
 - **Lt Gen A.K. Singh (Lieutenant Governor 2013-16):**
 - Suggested that ANIIDCO would be better suited than other departments but emphasized the need for expert agencies from outside the islands.
 - **Sanat Kaul (Chief Secretary in early 90s):**
 - Criticized ANIIDCO's tourism operations in a 2015 book.
 - Expressed doubt about ANIIDCO's ability to manage the ₹72,000 crore project without significant upgrades and improved staff.

BROAD CONCLUSION

- ANIIDCO, a quasi-government agency based in Port Blair, is tasked with overseeing a significant infrastructure project in Great Nicobar.
- It initially lacked necessary environmental policies and expertise.
- Concerns about conflicts of interest and governance issues have been raised regarding its role in the project.

SINKING OF ISLANDS IN TUVALU

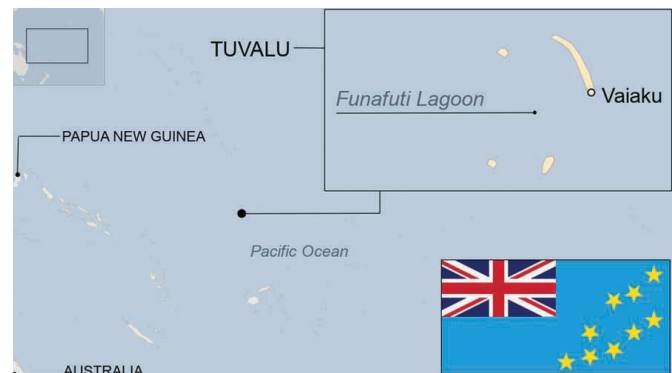
#CLIMATE CHANGE, #LOCATIONS

**PRIMARY
SOURCE** *The Indian
EXPRESS*

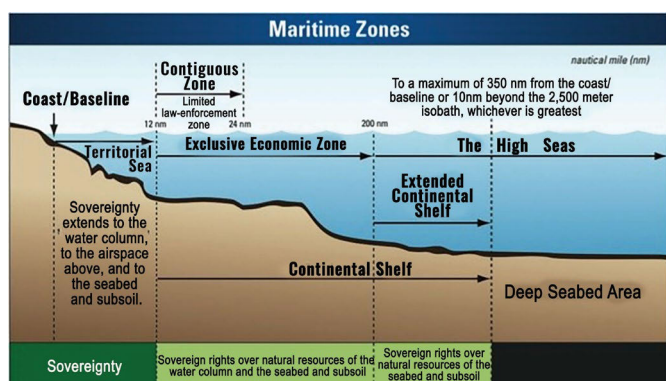
Tuvalu is a group of 9 atolls located in the Pacific Ocean. Climate change and rising sea level rise means that the islands are facing a risk of submergence.

TUVALU ISLANDS

- Tuvalu is an island nation located in the Central Pacific Ocean with a total area of only 26 sq km.
- Funafuti is the capital of Tuvalu.
- The island country has a population of about 11,000 people.
- Since the island is spread over a wide area of 900,000 sq km in the Pacific Ocean (twice the size of California). Tuvalu has a large exclusive economic zone in the Pacific Ocean, which is rich in ocean resources.
- The country is located on a group of 9 atolls, whose mean elevation is just 2 metres.
- Recent measurements reveal that Tuvalu has experienced a sea level rise of 15 cm over the past three decades, which is one and half times of the global average.
- According to projections by NASA, by 2050 daily tides will submerge half of the main atoll of Funafuti, which is home to 60% of Tuvalu's residents.
- Salt-water incursion has ruined groundwater creating a crisis of freshwater availability. This has forced residents of Tuvalu to depend on rainwater tanks and a central raised garden for growing vegetables and food items.

**WHAT IS TUVALU DOING FOR THIS CRISIS?**

- Tuvalu has entered into a landmark climate and security treaty with Australia in 2023 which allows 280 Tuvaluans to move to Australia annually.
- Construction of sea walls and barriers to guard against worsening sea storms.
- Building of 7 hectares of artificial land which can stay above tides.



TUVALU AND UNCLOS

- Under the UNCLOS, the extent of the maritime zone is decided by features of permanently dry land.
- Baseline for a maritime zone may be established by reference to the low-water line of a feature that is above water at all times. However, due to the rising sea level and possible submergence, island nations like Tuvalu risk losing or diminishing their Exclusive Economic Zones.
- Thus, Tuvalu has called for amending the UNCLOS which allows countries like it to permanently retain control of its vast maritime zone with a large blue economy like fishing rights and mining of seabed minerals.
- According to current international law, dry land is also essential for recognition of sovereignty. Tuvalu has been campaigning to have its maritime boundaries and statehood recognised for permanent use.

IN A FIRST, CRITICALLY ENDANGERED ELONGATED TORTOISE SPOTTED IN ARAVALLIS

#PRELIMSNUGGETS, #FLORA & FAUNA

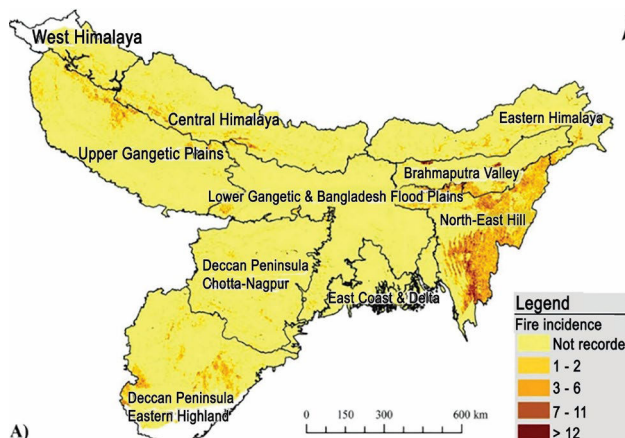
PRIMARY SOURCE | The Indian EXPRESS

A critically endangered species, the elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*), was spotted in Haryana's Damdama area during a research survey in the Aravallis.

ABOUT ELONGATED TORTOISE



- The species, also called the Sal forest tortoise, normally occurs in open deciduous forest patches, including Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and evergreen forest habitats, dry thorn forests, and savannah grasslands.
- The species is found in the Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam.
- In and around India, it is found in the Manas-Bhutan transboundary landscape, Corbett-Rajaji-Nepal Terai landscape, and northeast Myanmar and northeast Bangladesh transboundary landscape. There is an isolated population in Odisha also (Chotanagpur region).
- Over 90 percent of the habitat of the critically endangered elongated tortoise falls outside the protected area (PA) network in the Indian subcontinent.
- In India, the Sal forest tortoise is one of the 29 species (24 turtles + 5 tortoises) of freshwater tortoises and turtles.
- It is listed in Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).
- This is perhaps the only tortoise species in the Indian subcontinent that has the largest geographical distribution. However, everywhere it is rare.



AMUR FALCON CONSERVATION

#PRELIMSNUGGETS, #FLORA & FAUNA

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

Ahead of Amur Falcon's festival, Manipur distbans their hunting.

ABOUT AMUR FALCON

- **Species:** Amur falcon (*Falco amurensis*), locally known as 'Kahuaipuina'.
- **About Amur Falcons:**
 - **Appearance:** Medium-sized raptors with a distinctive long tail and sharp wings.
 - **Diet:** Primarily insectivorous; known for feeding on locusts and other insects during migration.
 - **Behavior:** Social birds, often seen in large flocks; they roost in trees and are known for their impressive aerial displays.
- **Migration Period:**
 - Arrive from breeding grounds in Northern China, Eastern Mongolia, and Far East Russia in early October.
 - Roost in Tamenglong until the end of November before migrating to wintering grounds in South Africa.
- **Migration Route:**
 - Notable for their long migratory journey, they travel thousands of kilometers across various terrains, demonstrating remarkable navigational skills.
- **Regulation:**
 - Immediate ban on hunting, catching, killing, and selling Amur falcons imposed by the district administration.
 - Owners of air guns must deposit their weapons with village authorities.
- **Legal Framework:**
 - Violations fall under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, specifically sections 50 and 51.
- **Conservation Efforts:**



- Authorities emphasize the critical nature of the falcons' life cycle during this period.
- Collection of air guns is mandatory by September 30, 2023, with a report to be submitted.

- **Awareness and Festivals:**

- Annual 'Amur Falcon' festival organized to raise awareness.
- Regular patrolling and conservation programs are implemented.

- **Tracking Initiatives:**

- Since 2016, efforts include tagging Amur falcons with radio transmitters to monitor migration routes.
- Plans to tag two additional birds for further study.

- **Enforcement:**

- Violators of the hunting ban face legal consequences as per the district magistrate's order.

These efforts aim to protect the Amur falcon during its critical migratory phase and promote biodiversity conservation in the region.

RHINO POPULATION AND THREATS

#PRELIMSNUGGETS #FLORA & FAUNA

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The rhinoceros population across the world has increased slightly but so have the killings, mostly in South Africa, as poaching fed by huge demand for rhino horns remains a top threat, conservationists said.

ABOUT RHINOCEROS

- **Population Increase:**
 - White rhinos rose from 15,942 in 2022 to 17,464 in 2023.
 - Black and greater one-horned rhino populations remained stable.
 - Northern white rhinos are technically extinct, with only two females in a secure conservancy in Kenya.
- **Poaching Statistics:**
 - 586 rhinos killed in Africa in 2023, an increase from 551 in 2022.
 - Most poaching occurs in South Africa, which has approximately 16,056 rhinos.

• **Current Population:**

- Just under 28,000 rhinos left globally, down from about 500,000 at the start of the 20th century.

• **Threats Faced:**

- Major threats include poaching for rhino horns, driven by demand for their perceived medicinal properties.
- Environmental threats such as habitat loss due to development and climate change.

• **Conservation Successes:**

- Increased protection measures have contributed to population growth; Kenya's rhino population rose from 380 in 1986 to 1,000 last year.
- Advocacy for campaigns to reduce demand for rhino horn and to educate communities on the ecological and economic benefits of rhinos.

• **Ecological Role:**

- Rhinos are crucial for maintaining ecosystems; they create pathways for other herbivores and help establish forests by dispersing seeds in their dung.

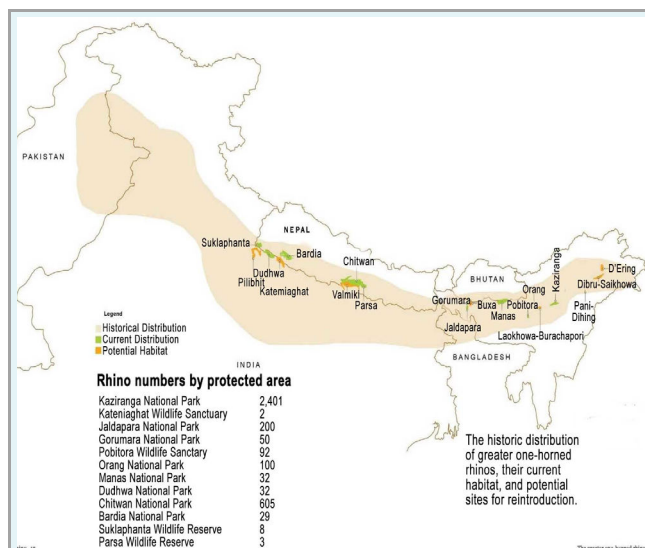
• **Cultural Significance:**

- The last male northern white rhino, Sudan, who died in 2018, is preserved and displayed to highlight the importance of conservation.

• **Expert Commentary:**

- Philip Muruthi from the Africa Wildlife Foundation emphasizes the need for advanced technologies for monitoring rhinos and community education to ensure their protection.

SGREATER ONE HORNED RHINO



- It is the **largest of the rhino species** and identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
- The **species is solitary**, except when adult males or rhinos nearing adulthood gather at wallows or to graze.
- They primarily graze, with a diet consisting of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.
- IUCN Status: **Vulnerable**

SUMATRAN RHINO



- They are the **smallest species** of Rhino.
- They **have two horns** that are dark grey to black in colour.
- They are fast runners and are very agile.
- IUCN Status: **Critically Endangered**

JAVAN RHINO

- They are **most threatened** of the five rhino species, with **only around 60 individuals** that live only in Java, Indonesia.
- It has a **dusky grey colour** and a **single horn** of up to about 10 inches.
- It is very **similar in appearance** to the closely-related **greater one-horned rhinoceros**.
- IUCN Status: **Critically Endangered**

BLACK RHINO

- Among black and white rhinos, black rhinos are the smaller of the two African rhino species.

- It is native to eastern and southern African countries.
- Black and white rhinos can be **distinguished by the shape of their lips**.
- **Black rhinos are browsers**, rather than grazers, meaning **they are herbivores** who do not feed on low-growing vegetation.
- They **have two horns**, which grow continually from the skin at their base throughout the rhino's life (like human fingernails).
- IUCN Status: **Critically Endangered**

WHITE RHINO

- They are the **second-largest land mammal** and also known as the **square-lipped rhinoceros**.
- The majority (98.8%) of the southern white rhinos occur in just four countries: **South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Kenya**.
- They are the **only of the five rhino species that are not endangered**.
- IUCN Status: **Near Threatened**

PRACTICE QUESTIONS**MCQS**

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the current status of rhinoceros populations and conservation efforts:

1. The white rhino population has shown a significant increase from 2022 to 2023.
2. The northern white rhino is considered extinct, with only a few individuals remaining in the wild.
3. Poaching remains the top threat to rhinos, despite some population increases due to conservation efforts.

4. The rhino population worldwide has decreased from approximately 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century to under 28,000 today.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Q2. Consider the following statements about La Nina:

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. La Nina events lead to exceptional warming of the Central Pacific Ocean.
2. La Nina events usually lead to warmer sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean.
3. La Nina events lead to increased fisheries in the Arabian Sea.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Tuvalu is located in the Indian Ocean.
2. Tuvalu has entered into an agreement with the European Union for its citizens reallocated due to sea level rise.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. China | 2. Vietnam |
| 3. Cambodia | 4. Thailand |
| 5. Brunei | |

How many of the above countries share a border with the South China Sea?

- (a) Only two (b) Only three
(c) Only four (d) All five

Q5. With reference to Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO), consider the following statements:

1. It is a quasi-government agency based in New Delhi.
2. It aims to develop and commercially exploit natural resources for sustainable development of the country.

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** India's water issues can only be addressed when there are overarching reforms in the water governance structure in India. Comment. Also, highlight the need for water pricing to enhance the sustainability of water in India.
- Q2.** Explain the functioning of La-Nina? What are the socio-economic consequences of La-Nina on India and the world?

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-d, 4-b, 5-b

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

DIABETES CURED THROUGH STEM CELL THERAPY

#BIOLOGY & BIOTECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*In a ground-breaking achievement, a woman with type 1 diabetes (T1D) in China has regained her insulin production through stem cell therapy. She received a **transplantation of reprogrammed stem cells** that reportedly “reversed” the disease. This is the first ever successful breakthrough in **regenerating functional insulin-producing cells** through stem cell therapy.*

ABOUT DIABETES

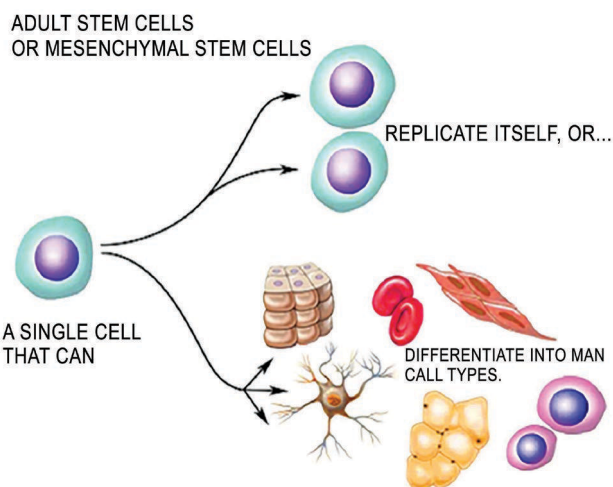
- Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a **person's blood glucose (sugar) level to become too high**. The hormone **insulin** – produced by the pancreas – is responsible for controlling the amount of glucose in the blood.
- There are two main types of diabetes:
 - **Type 1 diabetes** (insulin-dependent) is an **autoimmune condition** in which the body's **immune system mistakenly destroys insulin-making cells** (beta cells) in the pancreas. Characterised by deficient insulin production, the person requires **daily administration of insulin**. For decades, managing T1D has relied on insulin therapy alone.
 - **Type 2 diabetes**: Insulin produced by the body is either insufficient or the body's cells become less responsive to the effects of insulin (insulin resistance). This is managed mostly by taking oral drugs. Insulin may be needed in some cases.

WHAT ARE STEM CELLS?

- Stem cells are **undifferentiated cells** with the **potential to develop into specialised cell types** in

the body. They can **self-renew** which makes them valuable for therapeutic applications.

- **Stem cell therapy** is a cutting-edge development in regenerative medicine. The treatment **utilises stem cells** to promote the repair, regeneration, or replacement of damaged or diseased tissues within the body.



TYPES OF STEM CELLS

- **Totipotent**: Most versatile with potential to differentiate into all different cell types of an organism and extraembryonic cells (including placenta and umbilical cord). Only found in fertilised egg (zygote).
- **Pluripotent**: Derived from inner cell mass of a blastocyst (an early-stage embryo). Can give rise to all different cell types in the body (except extraembryonic cells). **E.g., Embryonic stem cells** and **induced pluripotent stem cells** (genetically reprogrammed to the pluripotent state from adult cells).
- **Multipotent**: More specialised than pluripotent stem cells and can differentiate into limited range of cell types within a specific tissue or organ. **E.g.,** Hematopoietic stem cells (give rise to various blood cell types), mesenchymal stem cells (can differentiate into bone, cartilage, fat cell etc.)

- **Unipotent:** Most specialised type of stem cells, can only renew themselves and differentiate into one specific cell type. **E.g.,** Stem cells in skin that can only differentiate into another skin cell.

STEM CELL THERAPY IN TYPE 1 DIABETES

- **Pluripotent stem cells** (that have the ability to transform into any cell type) are **pre-programmed into insulin-producing cells** (similar to the ones found in a healthy pancreas) and **transplanted** into the human body.
- After transplantation, these pre-programmed cells will **start producing insulin and help regulate glucose**. This is a potential game-changer in the treatment of T1D.

CHALLENGES USING STEM CELL THERAPY

- Difficulty in making stem cells fully function like natural insulin-producing cells.
- Risk of the body rejecting the transplanted cells. Avoiding rejection will require long-term immuno-suppression that could cause infections and cancer.

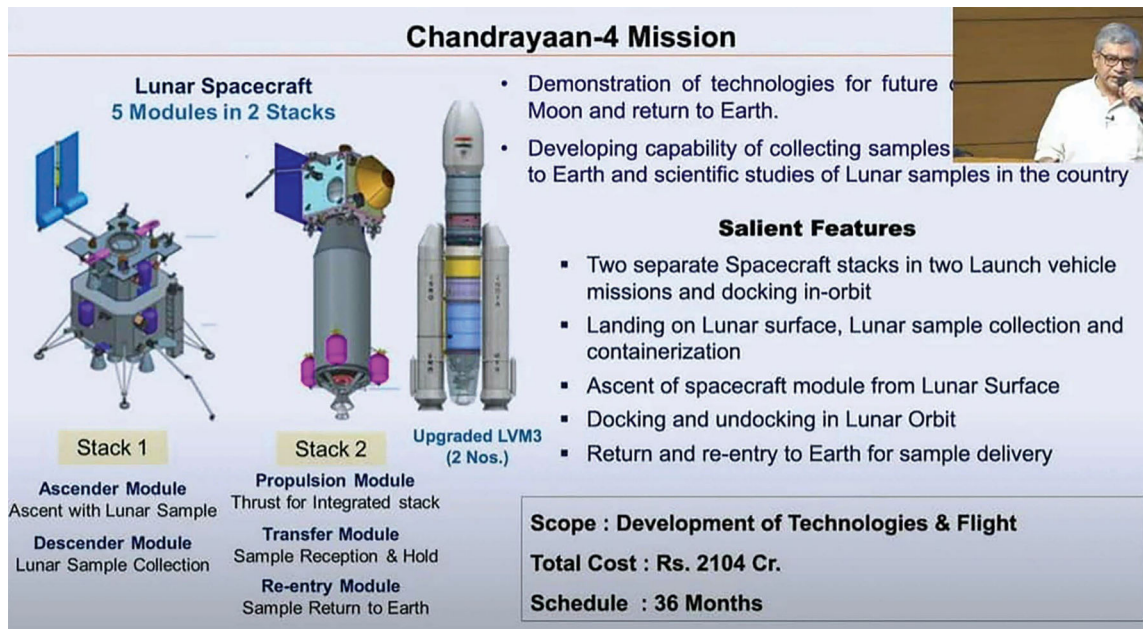
- Ensuring long-term survival and effectiveness of the transplanted cells.
- Potential ethical concerns with using embryonic stem cells. Regulatory approvals by the authorities needed before becoming available to the broader public.
- High cost and complexity of the therapy for widespread use.

CHANDRAYAAN-4 MISSION

#ASTRONOMY & SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCE *The Indian EXPRESS*

*The Union Cabinet has approved another ambitious lunar mission- **Chandrayaan-4**, with a budget of Rs 2104 crore, which is set to lay the foundation for India's ultimate goal of landing **astronauts on the Moon by 2040**.*



CHANDRAYAAN-4 MISSION

- **Chandrayaan-4** is a **planned lunar sample return mission** of the Indian Space Research Organisation and the fourth iteration in its Chandrayaan lunar exploration programme.
- The mission is currently under conceptualisation and expected to **launch around 2027**.

- **Aim:** To **demonstrate key technologies** essential for future crewed missions, including precision landing, sample collection, and safe return to Earth. This **sample return mission** will mark a significant leap forward from the successful Chandrayaan-3 landing, pushing the boundaries of India's space capabilities.
- The mission's design incorporates **five modules** across two separate launches, showcasing Isro's innovative

approach to complex space operations. These modules will work in tandem to land on the Moon, collect samples, and **return them safely to Earth** - a feat accomplished by only a handful of nations including the US and China.

- The mission will **validate critical processes** such as docking and undocking in lunar orbit, precise landing techniques, and the safe return of spacecraft through Earth's atmosphere. By mastering these technologies, Chandrayaan-4 will directly contribute to the

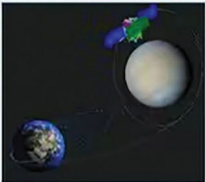

development of systems required for **India's planned crewed lunar landing in 2040**.

VENUS ORBITER MISSION

#ASTROWNMOMY & SPACE TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY
SOURCE The Indian
EXPRESS

After the success of the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) and Chandrayaan lunar missions, India now aims to explore Venus with its proposed Venus Orbiter Mission (Shukrayaan).

Venus Orbiter Mission							
  <p>Scientific Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface topography • Venusian dust, Venusian clouds, Lightning • Volcanism • Atmosphere, ionosphere & solar forcing • Sun-Venus Interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's first interplanetary mission to the orbit of planet Venus sister planet. • Unique instruments for new science data generation and opportunities on study of Venusian atmosphere, geological evolution for the Indian Science community. • Technologies for future inter-planetary missions, optimal orbit insertion approaches • Scheduled during March 2028 launch opportunity, which is the closest approach. <p>Salient Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Science instruments to study the Venusian surface and subsurface, atmospheric processes and influence of Sun on Venusian Atmosphere ▪ To study the underlying causes of transformation of Venus, which is believed to be once habitable and quite similar to Earth <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Scope</td> <td>: Development of Technologies & Mission accomplishment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Project Cost</td> <td>: Rs 1236 Cr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Schedule</td> <td>: March 2028 launch</td> </tr> </table>	Scope	: Development of Technologies & Mission accomplishment	Total Project Cost	: Rs 1236 Cr	Schedule	: March 2028 launch
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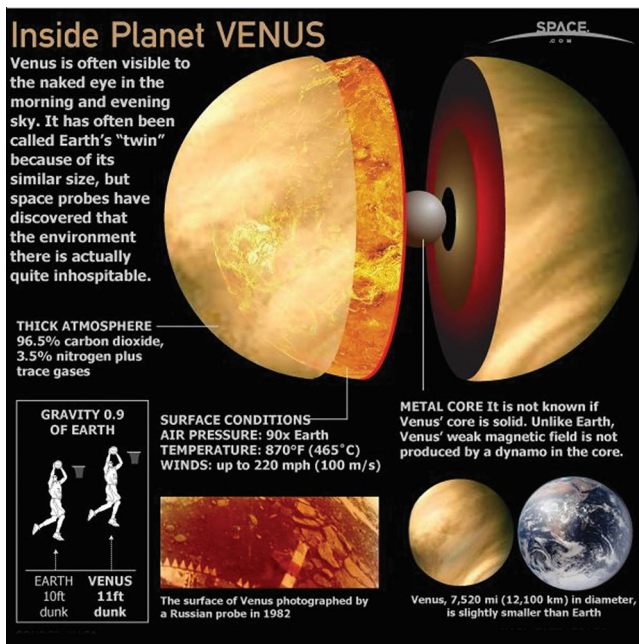
VENUS ORBITER MISSION

- The Union Cabinet has approved India's first mission to Venus which ISRO **aims to launch in March 2028**. This is the country's second interplanetary mission after the Mars Orbiter Mission launched in 2013.
- The mission is being developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- **Objective:** To study the planet's atmosphere, surface, and geological features using sophisticated scientific instruments.
 - Study the structure, composition, and dynamics of Venus's atmosphere.
 - Investigate surface processes and subsurface stratigraphy.
 - Explore solar wind interactions with the Venusian ionosphere.

- The mission will **place a spacecraft in orbit around Venus**. Once the satellite exits the Earth orbit, it will take around **140 days** to reach Venus.
- The mission will **carry scientific payloads weighing around 100 kg**. The orbiter is expected to **carry instruments** like synthetic aperture radar, infrared and ultraviolet cameras, and sensors that will study Venus's ionosphere.
- The mission will also see **India perform aero-braking** for the first time.
 - **Aero-braking** is a technique used to **reduce a satellite's orbit** by **using atmospheric drag** instead of relying solely on fuel-powered engines.
 - It is particularly useful for missions to planets with significant atmospheres, like Venus, where it **helps conserve fuel** while gradually lowering the satellite's altitude.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MISSION

- **Clues about Earth's Evolution:** Venus is often termed "**Earth's twin**" due to its similar size, mass, and density. By studying Venus, scientists can gather valuable information about **how planetary bodies evolve over time**. Understanding why Venus evolved into a hot, dry planet while Earth remains habitable may offer critical **insights into planetary development**, particularly for Earth-like planets.
- **Insights into Venus's Atmosphere:** The mission will provide key insights into the thick clouds that shroud Venus, composed primarily of carbon dioxide and sulfuric acid, and **explore whether there are any signs of active volcanoes**.
- **Clues about Climate Change and Atmospheric Dynamics:** Scientists believe that **more than four billion years ago**, Venus had enough water to **cover its surface with an ocean 3 km deep**. But now the planet has become dry and dusty. By comparing Venus's climate with Earth's, scientists hope to better understand **how climate change affects planetary atmospheres**.

**FACTS ABOUT VENUS**

- Venus has a **solid surface** by virtue of being one of the 3 inner planets besides Mercury and Earth. It is **nearly the same size as the Earth**.

- **96.5% of the atmosphere of Venus is made up of carbon dioxide** and there are **sulphuric acid clouds** on the planet. Thus, the planet has a **high greenhouse effect**.
- It has an **extremely high surface temperature** of around 462 degree Celsius, even hotter than Mercury (the planet that is closest to the Sun).
 - This may be possible due to a **runaway greenhouse effect**. The water present on the Venusian surface has evaporated because of the proximity of the planet to the Sun.
 - As water vapour is a greenhouse gas, it led to the **planet trapping more heat** and further evaporating water from its surface.
- The **atmospheric pressure on Venus** is much higher than on Earth. It is almost similar to the pressure felt underneath the oceans on Earth.
 - **Surface pressure on Venus is about 90 times that on Earth** while surface pressure on Mars is 1/100th of that on Earth.
- **Venus rotates very slowly on its axis** as compared to Earth. One rotation of Venus lasts around 243 Earth days.
 - Its **rotation period is longer than its orbital period**. (Rotation on its own axis – 243 days, Orbital period around the sun - 224.7 days).
 - The **planet has retrograde rotation**, meaning it spins in the direction opposite to the direction in which it orbits the Sun.
- Due to the slow rotation of Venus it has **no global magnetic field**. (Earth's magnetic field is due to rotation of iron core).
- NASA's image data from the Magellan spacecraft's visit to Venus has revealed **evidence of volcanic activity** on it. About 80% of the surface of Venus is composed of flat plains of volcanic origin.

UPCOMING VENUS MISSIONS

- The **US** has planned at least two more missions to Venus in the future — **DaVinci in 2029** and **Veritas in 2031**.
 - **NASA's DAVINCI** (Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigations of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging) mission will study Venus from above its clouds down to its surface, investigating how the

planet and its dense atmosphere formed and evolved over the past 4.5 billion years. Tentatively scheduled to be launched in June **2029** and would enter the Venusian atmosphere in June 2031.

- **VERITAS:** NASA's VERITAS (Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, and Spectroscopy) mission is expected to be launched in **2031**. VERITAS will use a suite of seven instruments to study the surface and atmosphere of Venus.
- **The European Space Agency (ESA)** has planned the **EnVision mission** for 2030. EnVision will study the atmosphere, surface, and interior of Venus.

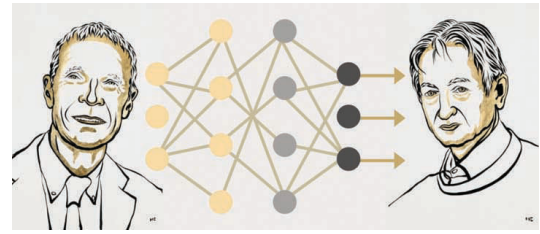
NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS 2024

#INTERNET & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
#AWARDS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The **2024 Nobel Prize in Physics** has been awarded to the U.S. scientist **John Hopfield** and British-Canadian scientist **Geoffrey Hinton** for foundational discoveries and inventions that **enable machine learning with artificial neural networks**.*

- Professor Hopfield of Princeton University in the U.S. is credited with developing the **Hopfield network**, a type of **recurrent neural network**.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

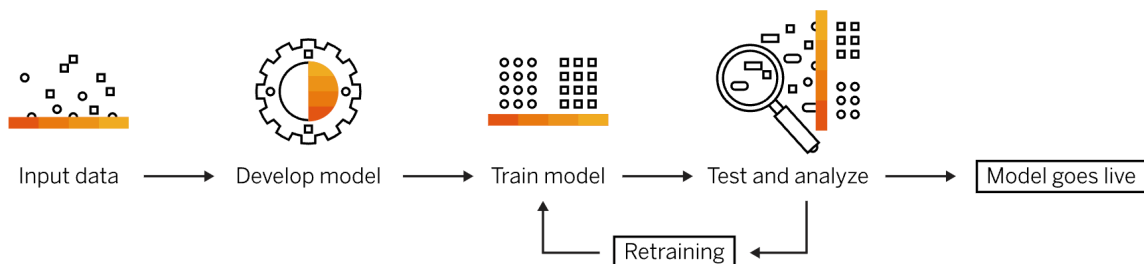
- Artificial intelligence is broadly defined as the **capability of a machine (computer systems) to imitate intelligent human behaviour**. Artificial intelligence systems are designed to perform complex tasks in a way that is similar to how humans solve problems. **E.g.**, Machines can perform cognitive tasks like thinking, perceiving, learning, problem-solving and decision-making.

How Artificial intelligence & Machine learning are related?

- Machine learning (ML) techniques, including Artificial neural networks (ANNs), are used to **achieve the goals of AI**, which is to create intelligent machines.
- **Machine learning is a subfield of AI**, and **Artificial neural networks are a specific type of machine learning algorithm** that uses interconnected nodes to learn from data.

MACHINE LEARNING

- Machine learning is focused on teaching computers to learn from data and to improve with experience – instead of being explicitly programmed to do so. In machine learning, **algorithms are trained to find patterns and correlations in large data sets** and to make the best decisions and predictions based on that analysis.



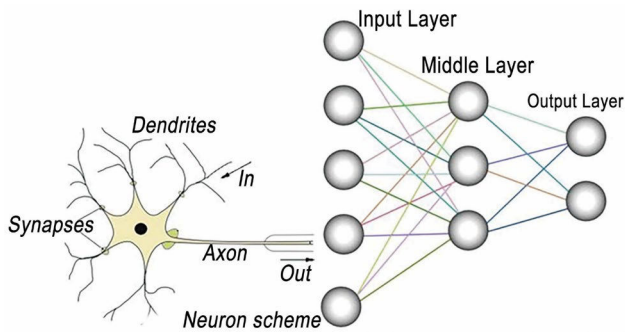
How the machine learning process works

- Machine learning applications improve their decision-making or predictive performance over time with more data access.

ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORK

- Artificial neural network is a computational model inspired by the **structure and functioning of neurons**

in the human brain. ANNs are a collection of thousands or millions of **interconnected nodes** or artificial neurons organised into layers. A connection between two neurons **allows information to flow between them.** Each neuron takes input from the previous layer, processes data and performs a computation, and passes the output to the next layer.



- ANNs are used for various tasks like pattern recognition, classification, regression, and decision-making. **E.g.,** In a neural network trained to identify whether a picture contains a cat or not, the different nodes would assess the information and arrive at an output that indicates whether a picture features a cat.

NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY 2024

#BIOLOGY & BIOTECHNOLOGY #AWARDS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

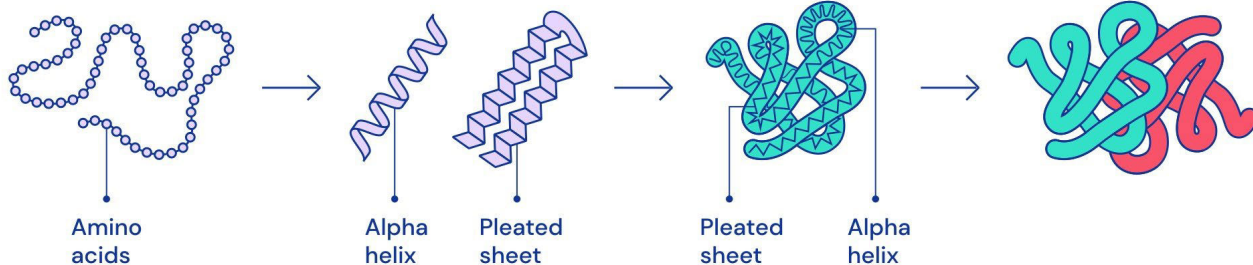
The Nobel Prize in Chemistry for 2024 has been jointly awarded to **David Baker** for his work on computational protein design (**building new proteins**) and to **Demis**

Every protein is made up of a sequence of amino acids bonded together

These amino acids interact locally to form shapes like helices and sheets

These shapes fold up on larger scales to form the full three-dimensional protein structure

Proteins can interact with other proteins, performing functions such as signalling and transcribing DNA



2. Based on Structure:

- **Globular proteins:** These are spherical or globular in shape. They are often involved in biological processes

Hassabis and John M. Jumper for predicting proteins' complex structures using an artificial intelligence (AI) model called AlphaFold.

PROTEINS: STRUCTURE & FUNCTION

- Proteins are the building blocks of life. Proteins are **biomolecules or polymers** formed from the **sequences of amino acids** (monomers).
- While there are many types of amino acids in nature, **only 20 of them in different combinations make up all the proteins** in the human body and in most life-forms.

TYPES OF PROTEINS

1. Based on Protein Folding:

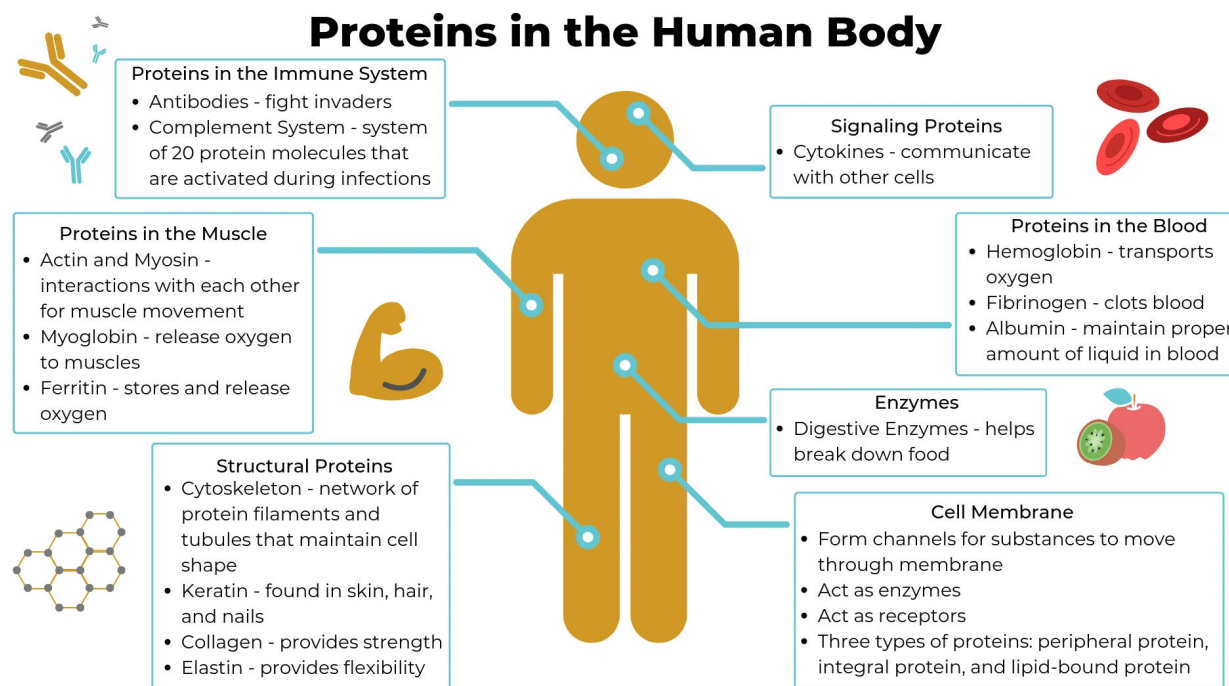
- **Primary:** linear sequence of amino acids in a polypeptide chain.
- **Secondary:** localised folding patterns within the polypeptide chain, primarily stabilised by hydrogen bonds.
 - **Alpha Helices:** Coiled structures that resemble a spring.
 - **Beta Sheets:** Flat, sheet-like structures formed by hydrogen bonds between different segments of the polypeptide chain.
- **Tertiary:** 3-dimensional folding in a single polypeptide chain by bonding between different side chains. Tertiary structure **determines the protein's function** and interactions with other molecules.
- **Quaternary:** bonding between more than two polypeptide chains. **E.g.,** Haemoglobin, the protein that carries oxygen in blood, is a protein with a quaternary structure (made of four subunits working together).

like enzymes (which speed up chemical reactions) and transport proteins (which carry molecules around the

body). **E.g.**, Haemoglobin (carries oxygen in the blood) and Insulin (regulates blood sugar).

- **Fibrous proteins:** These are long, thin, and fibrous in shape. They are often structural proteins, providing strength and support to tissues. **E.g.**, Keratin (found in hair, nails, and skin), collagen (found in bones, tendons, and ligaments).

FUNCTIONS OF PROTEINS



PROTEIN-FOLDING PROBLEM

- Protein does not try to bend into different shapes before settling into its final one. Instead it somehow knows the shape it needs to have and rapidly folds itself to acquire it. The mysterious nature of this 'knowledge' of the protein is called the **protein-folding problem**.
 - **Determining structure** is the first and most important step in **determining protein function**.
 - **Proteins** are long ribbons in which the **20 different amino acid building blocks** can be sequentially arranged to form innumerable combinations.
 - Even if researchers know the sequence of amino acids in a ribbon, the ribbon can **twist and fold in an astronomical number of possible shapes** for each sequence, thereby making protein structure determination extremely challenging.

- **Proteomics** is the large-scale study of proteins, their structures, functions, and interactions within a biological system.
- They provide structural support, are catalysts in biochemical reactions, move molecules like oxygen across biological membranes, control muscle contraction and help cells communicate with each other to perform their tasks among other functions.

- **For instance**, if a protein consists of only 100 amino acids, the protein can assume at least 1047 different 3D structures.
- The **structures of proteins can be determined** through techniques such as- X-ray crystallography, NMR spectroscopy, and electron microscopy.
- By the late 2010s, scientists had determined the **structures of around 1.7 lakh proteins** — a large number yet still small compared to the **roughly 200 million proteins in nature**. This situation changed drastically around 2018 (after the launch of AlphaFold).

CONTRIBUTION OF THE NOBEL WINNERS

1. Hassabis and Jumper (AlphaFold AI Model):

- Hassabis co-founded DeepMind in 2010. Here, Hassabis and his colleagues unveiled AlphaFold in 2018. **AlphaFold is a deep-learning model** able to predict the 3D structures of almost all proteins after training on the set of known structures.

- DeepMind launched its successor AlphaFold 2 in 2020, when it was **able to predict the structure of proteins with an accuracy** comparable to that of X-ray crystallography.
- Jumper led the work on **AlphaFold 3**, which DeepMind released in May 2024. This model is **able to predict the structures of various proteins** as well as how two proteins and/or a protein and another molecule might interact.
- These machine-learning models are **capable of deducing the 3D shapes of most proteins** in a matter of hours — a task that once required several months/years.
- **AlphaFold** has now **predicted the structure of almost all 200 million proteins** from nearly a million species. The code for the AlphaFold model has been publicly available since 2021, and the AI tool has been used by more than two million people from 190 countries.

2. Baker (computer software Rosetta):



- Baker developed **computerised methods to create proteins** that did not previously exist and which, in many cases, have **entirely new functions**.
 - Baker used his **computer software Rosetta to generate new proteins** that never existed naturally.
 - Instead of predicting the protein structure based on amino acid sequences, he created new protein structures and **used Rosetta to determine the amino acid sequence**. It was done by searching a database of all known protein structures and looking for short fragments of proteins that had similarities with the desired structure.
 - Rosetta then optimised these fragments and proposed an amino acid sequence.
- Baker too made the code for Rosetta freely available so that researchers can develop the software and find new areas of application.

NOBEL PRIZE IN MEDICINE 2024

#BIOLOGY & BIOTECHNOLOGY #AWARDS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Nobel Prize for Medicine for 2024 has been awarded to **Victor Ambros** and **Gary Ruvkun**. The American scientists were honoured for the **discovery of microRNA** and its **role in post-transcriptional gene regulation**.*

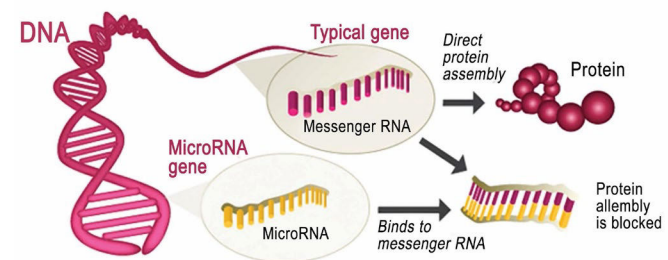
Awarded to	
 Victor Ambros	+ Awarded the prize for the discovery of microRNA and its crucial role in how multicellular organisms grow and live.
 Gary Ruvkun	+ MicroRNA helps to control gene activity, allowing cells to perform a range of functions in the body. Their discovery helps explain why, despite having the same genetic information in DNA, the cells of the human body vary so much.

THE NOBEL COMMITTEE DESCRIBED THEIR WORK AS:

A "groundbreaking discovery [that] revealed a completely new principle of gene regulation that turned out to be essential for multicellular organisms, including humans".

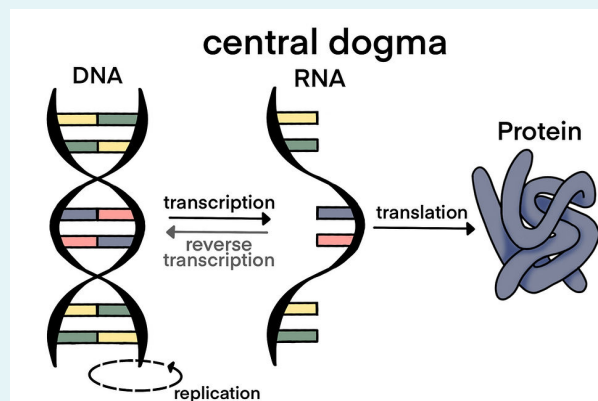
WHAT IS microRNA?

- MicroRNA (miRNA) is a **small RNA molecule** that consists of 22 nucleotides.
- It is a **non-coding RNA** (does not code for proteins), rather it helps **cells control their protein production**.
- It is found in all multi-celled organisms - plants, animals, mammals, and fungi. As per current knowledge, the human genome codes for **over 1,000 microRNAs**.
- **MicroRNA controls gene expression** by binding with another type of molecule called **messenger RNA (mRNA)** in the cell cytoplasm. Instead of being translated quickly into a protein, the **marked mRNA will be either destroyed and its components recycled**, or it will be preserved and translated later.
- **Functions:**
 - Inhibit protein formation by either degrading the mRNA or by blocking the protein assembly.
 - Post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression



CENTRAL DOGMA OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

- Central dogma of molecular biology explains how genetic information flows from DNA to RNA to proteins.
- Gene expression is the process our cells use to **convert instructions in DNA into proteins**. This happens in two-stages called **transcription** (occurs in the nucleus, in eukaryotic organisms) and **translation** (occurs in cytoplasm).
 - **Transcription:** mRNA copies the sequence of a gene from DNA, and then leaves the nucleus and travels to cytoplasm.
 - **Translation:** Using the template encoded by mRNA, translation is carried out by ribosomes, i.e., the information in the mRNA is used to synthesise proteins (building blocks of life).
- In **prokaryotic cells** (such as bacteria), which lack a nucleus, transcription and translation occur in the same cellular compartment, the cytoplasm.
- In **eukaryotic organisms**, transcription occurs in the nucleus, while translation occurs in the cytoplasm.

**TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION**

- **Transcription** is the process of copying DNA into RNA. It is the first step in gene expression, which is the process by which genes are used to make proteins. Transcription occurs in the **nucleus** of eukaryotic cells. During transcription, the DNA is copied into a complementary RNA molecule. This RNA molecule, called **messenger RNA (mRNA)**, then leaves the nucleus and travels to the

cytoplasm, where it is used to synthesise proteins by translation.

- **Translation** is the process of using mRNA to make a protein. It is the second step in gene expression. Translation occurs in the cytoplasm of eukaryotic cells. **Translation is carried out by ribosomes**, which use the information in the mRNA to synthesise a chain of amino acids. The chain of amino acids is then folded into a protein.

CONTRIBUTION OF AMBROS AND RUVKUN

- In the 1980s, Ambros and Ruvkun were postdoctoral fellows in the laboratory of Robert Horvitz, who won the Nobel in 2002. They **discovered a microRNA** which was inhibiting a gene expression, while **studying a tiny roundworm called C. Elegans**.
 - It was found that the lin-4 gene hindered the lin-14 gene, but how this happened was not known.
 - Through his studies, Ambros found that the **lin-4 gene produced an unusually short RNA molecule**, which was inhibiting lin-14. This turned out to be microRNA.
- Back then, the common understanding was that to **regulate a gene, its production of mRNA has to be targeted**. They showed that it is not the production of mRNA from lin-14 that is inhibited by lin-4. The **regulation appeared to occur at a later stage** (translational) in the process of gene expression, through the **shutdown of protein production**.

ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF microRNA

- MicroRNA (miRNA) plays a crucial role in **regulating gene expression**, and thus impacts cellular processes.

1. microRNA and Diseases:

- **Dysregulation of miRNA expression** can lead to severe consequences for human health. Conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases are strongly associated with altered expression of miRNA. **E.g.,**
 - **Cancer:** In the case of cancer, miRNA dysregulation can result from the amplification or deletion of miRNA genes, defects in miRNA biogenesis, or abnormal transcriptional control.
 - **Autoimmune Diseases:** Dysfunction of miRNA can disrupt immune responses and trigger autoimmune

diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis. MicroRNA imbalances may lead to the production of autoantibodies that attack the body's own tissues.

- **Inherited diseases:** Dysregulated miRNAs can cause skeletal growth defects, cataract, progressive hearing loss, kidney diseases, neurological disorders, even obesity and diabetes.

2. Role in Diagnostics and Therapeutics:

- **Diagnostic Biomarkers:** Certain miRNAs can **serve as biomarkers** for diagnosing human cancers. For example, specific miRNAs have been linked to prognosis and can help predict the course of the disease.
- **Therapeutic Targets:** Drugs are being designed to **modulate miRNA activity** (to either inhibit harmful miRNAs or enhance beneficial ones) to treat diseases like cancer and autoimmune disorders.

HYDROGEN AS AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL

#ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

PRIMARY
SOURCE The Indian
EXPRESS

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has exempted **export-oriented green hydrogen projects** from its domestic solar module manufacturer list (ALMM), **allowing them to use cheaper imported solar modules.**

HYDROGEN AS AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL

- Hydrogen is the **lightest** and the **most abundant element** in the universe. On Earth, it is found in compounds like water or hydrocarbons. However, Hydrogen is **not present in the free state**. Therefore, it must be created and stored before it tends to be utilised.
- **Hydrogen Fuel:** Hydrogen fuel is produced by **splitting water (H₂O)** into its components: hydrogen (H₂) and oxygen (O₂). The hydrogen gas can be used to **power fuel cells**, which generate electricity through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen, releasing only water vapour as a byproduct.

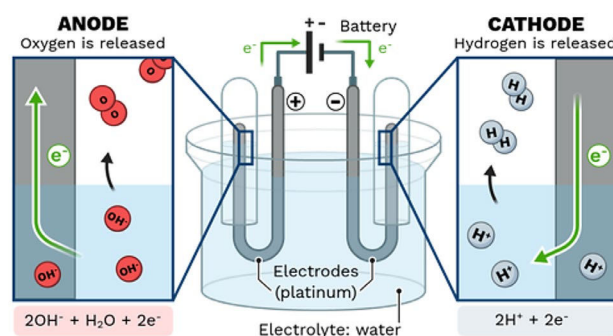


Figure 1 - An electrolytic cell that turns water into hydrogen and oxygen gas.

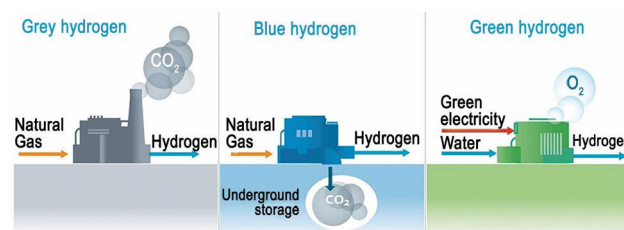
- Owing to its clean combustion, producing **only water as a byproduct**, makes it an attractive option for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change. Thus, Hydrogen is gaining significant attention as a **potential alternative fuel**.

WAYS OF USING HYDROGEN AS A FUEL

- **Hydrogen Fuel Cell:** Fuel cells based on Hydrogen and Oxygen. Produces Water as a by-product.
- **Hydrogen CNG** (Used as transportation fuel): Mixture of hydrogen and CNG in a fixed ratio, enables Hydrogen being used as fuel in conventional engines. HCNG increases the efficiency of combustion of CNG and is less polluting.

TYPES OF HYDROGEN

- **Hydrogen** can be produced from a **variety of resources**, such as natural gas, nuclear power, biomass, and renewable power like solar and wind. Hydrogen is an **invisible gas**. Depending on the type of production used, **different colour names** are assigned to the hydrogen.

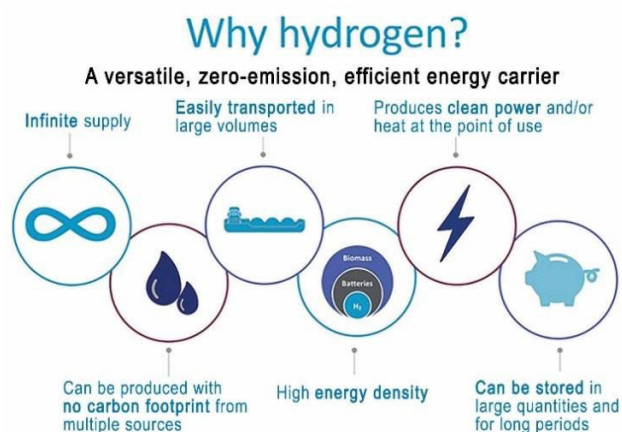


SOME COMMON TYPES OF HYDROGEN

1. **Grey hydrogen:** Grey hydrogen is produced using **fossil fuels** such as **natural gas or coal**. Grey hydrogen accounts for roughly 95% of the hydrogen produced in the world today.
 - The two main production methods are steam methane reforming and coal gasification. Both of these processes **release carbon dioxide (CO₂)**.

- If the carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, then the hydrogen produced is referred to as **grey hydrogen**.
- 2. **Blue Hydrogen:** Blue hydrogen is similar to grey hydrogen, except that most of the **CO₂ emissions are sequestered** (stored in the ground) using carbon capture and storage (CCS).
 - Capturing and storing the carbon dioxide instead of releasing it into the atmosphere allows blue hydrogen to be a **low-carbon fuel**.
 - Blue hydrogen is a cleaner alternative to grey hydrogen, but is **expensive** since carbon capture technology is used.
- 3. **Green Hydrogen:** Green hydrogen is hydrogen produced using electricity from **clean energy sources**, such as wind and solar energy, which do not release greenhouse gases when generating electricity.
 - Green hydrogen is made when water (H₂O) is split into hydrogen (H₂) and oxygen (O₂) via a process known as **electrolysis**.
- 4. **Pink Hydrogen:** Pink hydrogen is produced through electrolysis of water but using energy from **nuclear power**, which does not produce any carbon dioxide emissions.
 - Pink hydrogen facilities can achieve a **high capacity factor** due to the steady base-load profile of nuclear power (involving both stability and density), as compared to the **intermittent supply** from renewable sources (solar, wind).
- 5. **Turquoise Hydrogen:** Turquoise hydrogen is made using a process called **methane pyrolysis**. In this process methane is split into hydrogen and solid carbon with heating in reactors or blast furnaces.

UTILITY OF HYDROGEN FUEL



- **Abundant in nature and highly efficient.** E.g., Hydrogen is two to three times more efficient than petrol.
- **Hydrogen is a versatile fuel** which can be transported as gas by pipelines or in liquid form like LNG and can be transformed into electricity by fuel cells.
- **Strengthen energy security** by being a direct replacement of fossil fuels.
- **Green hydrogen can be stored for a long period** and can be used when renewable energy is not available for power generation with stationary fuel cells or hydrogen-ready gas turbines.
- **Green hydrogen is a clean fuel** which can decarbonise a range of sectors including iron and steel, chemicals, and transportation.
- **Facilitate acceleration to the green economy.** Presently, hydrogen is used in the refining industry, ammonia making, methanol manufacturing, steel making industries etc.

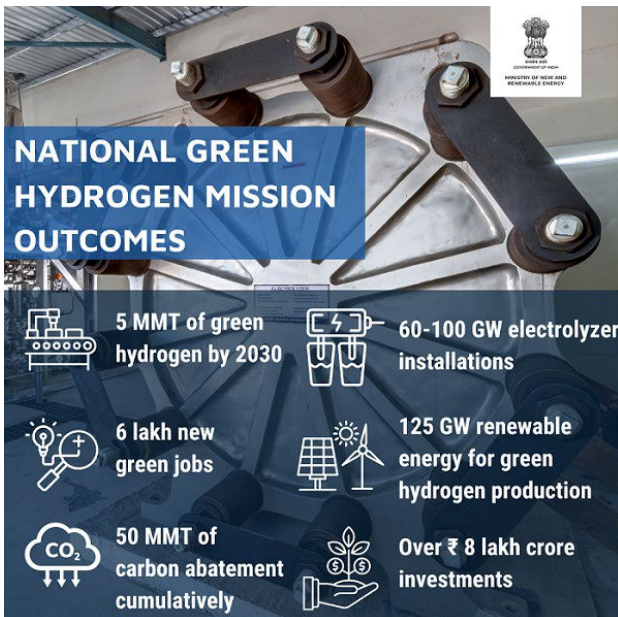
CHALLENGES IN USING HYDROGEN AS A FUEL

- **High production cost:** Majority of hydrogen at present is extracted by **energy-intensive processes** like breaking down fossils, electrolysis of water etc. which adds to the cost of production of Hydrogen. Further, Hydrogen needs to be kept at a stable **minus 253°C** (far below the temperature of (-) 163°C at which Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is stored), which needs scaling of technology and makes its 'prior-to-use-cost' extremely high.
- **Extraction causes pollution:** Production of grey hydrogen is responsible for around 830 million-tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.
- **Safety of hydrogen fuel tanks:** Hydrogen is highly flammable and explosive in nature, it is colourless, odourless, and its flames are not visible by naked eyes.
- **Storage capacity requirement:** India has insufficient storage capacity for the current state of domestic consumption.
- **Lack of operational fuelling station infrastructure** is a big barrier to adoption of hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles. It would require large-scale investments in

underground piping and underground caves and filling stations.

NATIONAL HYDROGEN MISSION

- The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched in **January 2023**, with an outlay of Rs. **19,744 crores** from FY 2023-24 to FY 2029-30.
- **Aim:** To develop India into a global hub for production, usage and export of Green hydrogen and its derivatives.
- The scheme envisages **generation of hydrogen from green power sources** with a target of **5MMT production capacity** of Green Hydrogen per annum.
- **Initiative of:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).



WAY FORWARD

Development of technology to produce "green" hydrogen is expensive. However, falling prices for renewable energy and fuel cells and stringent climate change regulations have spurred investment in the sector.

- **Investing in R&D** and promoting private sector participation in the hydrogen economy.
- **Developing standardised procedures**, rules and standards for hydrogen economy which will standardise and scale up production.

- **Mandating large users of hydrogen to shift to green hydrogen** such as refineries, iron, and steel plants etc. For example, A minimum green hydrogen mandate can be introduced in such industries.
- **Green hydrogen facilities can be created at sites** where the cost of producing renewable energy is lowest. **E.g.,** In Thar desert region in Rajasthan and Ladakh etc.
- **Facilitating international trade** in clean & green hydrogen.

EXERCISE YUDH-ABHYAS

#DEFENCE

PRIMARY SOURCE

The 20th edition of India-US joint military exercise YUDH-ABHYAS 2024 was conducted at Foreign Training Node in Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan. This edition of YUDH-ABHYAS has a significant increase in terms of troop strength and equipment employed in the joint exercise focusing on semi-desert environment.

ABOUT YUDH-ABHYAS

- YUDH-ABHYAS is an annual exercise between militaries of USA & India i.e. Indian Army & US Army.
- First edition of YUDH-ABHYAS was held in 2004.
- It is held alternatively in India and USA.

SIGNIFICANCE

- **Enhance joint military capability** of both sides to undertake counter-terrorism operations in a sub-conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
- **Prepare a joint exercise** to a terrorist action, joint planning and combined field training exercises that simulate real-world counter-terror missions.
- **Share best practices in tactics**, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations.
- **Facilitate development of interoperability** and bonhomie between the two armies.
- **Enhance defence cooperation** between India & USA.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to Venus:

1. Venus has an atmosphere largely composed of Methane.
2. There is no evidence of volcanic activity on Venus.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. MicroRNA molecules are long RNA sequences that regulate gene expression.
2. MicroRNAs are found in almost all multicellular organisms including humans.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) are best described by which of the following statements?

- (a) Approach to let computers learn through experience without explicitly being programmed.
(b) Machine learning algorithm where two neural networks compete against each other.
(c) AI systems capable of processing multiple data sources such as text, images, audio, and video.
(d) Machine learning algorithm consisting of interconnected nodes organised in layers modelled on the human brain.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Stem cells are unique cells that have the potential to develop into specialised cell types.
2. Stem cell therapy can be utilised to treat blood-related disorders and diabetes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. YUDH-ABHYAS, is a joint military exercise between:

- (a) India-Japan (b) Bangladesh-India
(c) USA-India (d) India-Australia

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the significance of Chandrayaan-4 mission in shaping India's future space missions.

Q2. Discuss the significance and challenges ahead in using Hydrogen as an alternative fuel.

Answers: 1-d, 2-b, 3-d, 4-c, 5-c

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER I (MAIN)

ASI FLAGS CONFLICTS OVER SHARED CONTROL OF MONUMENTS WITH WAQF BOARD

#HERITAGEPROTECTION #CULTURE #ASI

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

*The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), in its submission to a Parliamentary panel discussing **the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, highlighted several issues arising from the dual status of protected monuments that are also notified as Waqf properties. Referring to examples like **Fatehpur Sikri in Agra and Atala Masjid in Jaunpur**, ASI officials contended that this overlapping status leads to conflicts and administrative complications.*

ISSUES CONCERNING WAQF PROPERTIES AND ASI'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS

1. Declaration of monuments as Waqf properties:

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) reported that the Waqf Board has declared 53 monuments as Waqf properties under **the Waqf Act of 1995**.
- These monuments were already protected under ASI's jurisdiction, leading to overlapping claims of authority.

2. Jurisdictional conflicts:

- ASI has raised concerns about jurisdictional conflicts arising from the Waqf Board's actions.
- The designation of these monuments as Waqf properties after they were already notified as protected has complicated the management and preservation responsibilities.

3. Restrictions on conservation activities:

- ASI officials have reported challenges in conducting conservation work on these monuments due to restrictions imposed by the Waqf Board. Specific issues include:

- **Unauthorized modifications:** The Waqf Board has made various alterations to the original structures, which ASI believes threaten the monuments' authenticity and integrity.
- **Examples of concern:**
 - Installation of unauthorized fixtures in **Mecca Masjid, Ahmednagar**.
 - Construction of shops within the enclosure of the **Atala Masjid, Jaunpur**.
- **Interference in management:** In Fatehpur Sikri, the Waqf Board has reportedly appointed its own tour guides, replacing those certified by ASI.

4. Opposition to ASI's claims:

- Committee members, including opposition party representatives, have contested the ASI's claims:
 - **Legislative framework:** They argue that the ASI is not fully adhering to its own legislative framework. The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act** includes provisions that balance private property rights with public interests in preservation.
 - **Historical basis for Waqf designations:** Opposition members assert that the Waqf Board's designations are based on historical evidence of **'Waqf by user'** and are not arbitrary.

5. Legislative concerns:

- Opposition members have warned that removing the **'Waqf by user' clause from the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, could lead to increased legal disputes and multiple claims over Waqf properties, exacerbating the existing conflicts.

6. Criticism of ASI's inaction:

- ASI has faced criticism for its perceived inaction regarding the Waqf Board's alleged undermining of the integrity of protected monuments.
- Critics have urged ASI to provide explanations for not using its legislative powers more effectively to address these issues.

Overall, the debate highlights the challenges of balancing cultural heritage preservation with historical ownership claims, emphasizing the need for a clear and coherent framework to resolve conflicts between public institutions and private entities.

ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND REMAINS (AMASR) ACT

Purpose and enactment

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) was enacted by the Indian Parliament in **1958**.
- The Act aims to preserve and protect ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains of national importance.
- The Act regulates archaeological excavations and safeguards sculptures, carvings, and similar objects, ensuring the preservation of India's rich cultural heritage.

Role of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI):

- The **ASI operates under the provisions of the AMASR Act**. It is responsible for carrying out the Act's objectives, including the protection and conservation of designated monuments and archaeological sites.

Regulations on Protected areas:

- The AMASR Act designates a 100-meter radius around each monument as a prohibited area, where **no construction or alteration except certain circumstances is allowed without permission**.
- **The Central government** can extend the prohibited area beyond 100 meters.
- An additional 200-meter area is classified as regulated, where any construction or modifications require prior approval.
- **The National Monuments Authority (NMA)**, established under the Act, is the regulatory body responsible for overseeing activities within these zones and granting necessary permissions.

Amendments:

- **The Act was amended in 2010** to strengthen penal provisions against encroachments and illegal constructions near monuments.
- **Establishment of a 100-meter prohibited area around national monuments, with a 200-meter regulated zone where construction requires NMA approval.**

- **Introduction of heritage by-laws for individual monuments**, prepared by expert bodies to address specific needs.
- The Act provided a **clear statutory definition of 'prohibited' and 'regulated' areas** around monuments, establishing precise guidelines for land use in these regions.

Role of the National Monuments Authority (NMA):

- The NMA is tasked with implementing the AMASR Act, supervising the protection and preservation of ancient monuments and archaeological sites, and regulating construction activities within the protected and regulated areas.
- The NMA has the authority to grant permissions for any construction or development within the designated zones, ensuring that heritage conservation is maintained.

Definitions

- **Ancient monument:** Defined as any structure, erection, monument, or site of historical, archaeological, or artistic interest that has **existed for at least 100 years**.
- **Archaeological sites and remains:** Areas containing ruins or relics of historical or archaeological significance, **also existing for not less than 100 years**.

AMASR AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Introduction:

- The AMASR (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains) Amendment Bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2017, by the Minister of Tourism and Culture.
- This Bill seeks to amend the original Act, which was enacted in 1958 to protect ancient monuments and archaeological sites.

Key amendments

- **Construction in prohibited areas**
 - The Bill allows for public works to be constructed in these prohibited areas. This includes infrastructure projects deemed necessary by the central government for public welfare.
- **Approval process for construction**
 - The Bill stipulates that any construction, reconstruction, repair, or renovation within these prohibited areas must be approved. The relevant

central government department must submit an application to the competent authority.

- The central government will then assess whether the construction qualifies as a public work and will communicate its decision to the applicant within ten days.
- **Definition of Public works:**
 - The Bill introduces a specific definition for public works: *'construction works related to infrastructure financed and carried out by any central government department or office for public purposes, necessary for public safety or security, and where no viable alternative exists beyond the prohibited area.'*
- **Assessment requirements:**
 - The Bill also expands the scope of impact assessments required for public works. It includes considerations of archaeological, visual, and heritage impacts in the prohibited areas.
- **Rationale:**
 - The central government has argued that the prohibition on new construction within protected areas is hindering public works and developmental projects.
 - They believe the amendment is necessary to facilitate infrastructure development while balancing the need to preserve historical sites.
- **Current Status:**
 - The Amendment Bill was passed in January 2018.
 - It was then referred to a Select Committee in the Rajya Sabha.
 - The committee's report, submitted in 2019, recommended evaluating the area limit for prohibiting construction on a case-by-case basis rather than applying a blanket 100-metre restriction.
 - It also raised concerns about the definition of public works, noting that it excludes certain public utility projects such as Metro construction, which do not directly relate to safety and security.
 - The committee suggested the Bill be passed following consultations with central and state governments and relevant departments.
 - It also provided observations and recommendations for drafting notifications and rules related to the Bill.

ABOUT NATIONAL MONUMENTS AUTHORITY (NMA)

- **The National Monuments Authority (NMA) was established under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in accordance with the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010.**
- **Enacted in 2010**, this Act aimed to enhance the protection and preservation of India's rich cultural heritage by managing the areas surrounding centrally protected monuments.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Protection and preservation:** The NMA is tasked with the critical role of safeguarding monuments and archaeological sites through effective management of the prohibited and regulated zones around these sites.
 - **Managing prohibited and regulated Areas:** Ensuring that activities within these areas do not compromise the integrity and preservation of the monuments.
 - **Granting permissions:** Reviewing and approving construction-related activities within the prohibited and regulated areas to prevent potential damage to the heritage sites.
- **Addressing urbanization and development:**
 - With the surge in urbanization, population growth, and development pressures, there is increasing strain on land, including those areas around centrally protected monuments.
 - **Balancing Development and preservation:** Regulating growth and construction around these monuments to **balance the needs of urban development** with the essential requirements for preservation and protection of heritage sites.
- **Public scrutiny:**
 - The NMA is required to **scrutinize heritage by-laws and obtain public objections and suggestions** before granting approvals.
- **Organizational structure:**
 - The Act mandates the **constitution of the NMA with a Chairperson, up to five whole-time and five part-time members, and a Member Secretary.**

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- The **Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** serves as an **ex officio member**.
- **Grading and Classification:**
 - The NMA is also responsible **for grading and classifying monuments** to streamline their management and preservation.

ABOUT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ASI)

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is a prominent government agency tasked with archaeological research, conservation, and preservation of cultural and historical monuments across India.
- **Historical background:**
 - **Cunningham, with his expertise in Brahmi**, conducted extensive surveys of Buddhist monuments across India.
 - Despite early challenges, he advocated for the establishment of a formal archaeological body.
 - **The ASI was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham**, who also served as its first **Director-General**. This initiative marked the beginning of systematic archaeological research in India.
 - **Predecessors:**
 - **The Asiatic Society, founded by British Indologist Sir William Jones in 1784**, conducted early research into India's history.
 - The society, based in Calcutta, published 'Asiatic Researches' and made significant contributions to the study of ancient Persian texts.
 - **Notable early members, such as Charles Wilkins, translated the Bhagavad Gita into English, furthering the understanding of Indian heritage.**
- **Early efforts:**
 - **James Prinsep's successful decipherment of the Brahmi script in 1837** was a pivotal moment, greatly enhancing the understanding of ancient Indian inscriptions and history.
 - **Expansion and reform: The 1958 AMASR Act placed the ASI under the Ministry of Culture, and the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act (1972)** ensured national protection for important monuments.
- **Organization and structure:**

- **The ASI is headed by a Director-General**, supported by an **Additional Director-General, two Joint Director-Generals, and seventeen Directors**.
- The organization operates under **the Ministry of Culture**.
- The ASI administers over 3,650 monuments and sites of national importance, including temples, mosques, forts, and other historical structures.
- **Scientific preservation:**
 - **Establishment of the Science Branch: Founded in 1917 by Mohammed Sanaullah Khan, the Science Branch focuses on preserving and chemically treating artifacts.**
 - The branch has expanded its scope to include material analysis and conservation.

FATEHPUR SIKRI

- **Located:** Uttar Pradesh.
- **Founded by: Akbar in 1571** as the Mughal Empire's capital. **It served as the capital until 1585** when Akbar abandoned it for a campaign in Punjab, and **it was completely abandoned by 1610**.
- Named after the former village of Sikri, the site has revealed ancient temples through ASI excavations. **Previously controlled by the Sakarwar Rajputs until 1527.**
- Akbar constructed a religious compound and later a walled city here, **calling it Fatehpur Sikri, or 'City of Victory,' following his Gujarat campaign in 1573.**
- Recognized for its historical significance and architecture, **Fatehpur Sikri was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.**

ATALA MASJID, OR ATALA MOSQUE

- **It is a 14th-century mosque in Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh.**
- Built on the site of the Atala Devi temple, demolished in 1364, **construction began in 1376 under Firuz Shah Tughlaq**, with materials from demolished temples.
- **The mosque was completed by Ibrahim Shah Sharqi in 1408.**
- The mosque features a central courtyard with the Madarsa Din Dunia.

- It has three large gateways and has a central dome (nearly 17 meters high).

THE WAQF AMENDMENT BILL 2024

#HERITAGEPROTECTION #CULTURE #ACTS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The Joint Committee of Parliament reviewing the Waqf (Amendment) Bill has, according to sources, received a total of eight lakh petitions from both institutions and the public.

THE WAQF (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

- The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, introduced in the Lok Sabha, proposes significant amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995.
- The Act regulates waqf property in India, which refers to the endowment of movable or immovable property for religious or charitable purposes under Muslim law.
- The Bill aims to enhance management, transparency, and efficiency in the administration of waqf properties.

Renaming and scope:

- The Bill proposes renaming the Act to the 'United Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995'.
- It will continue to regulate waqf properties but introduces new provisions for better governance and oversight.

Formation and management of Waqf:

• Formation of Waqf

- Original provisions: Waqf could be established through declaration, long-term use (waqf by user), or endowment when succession ends (waqf-alal-aulad).
- Amendment provisions:
 - Only individuals practicing Islam for at least five years may declare a waqf.
 - The individual must own the property being declared.
 - Removal of waqf by user.
 - Waqf-alal-aulad must not deny inheritance rights to heirs, including women.

• Government property as Waqf:

- The Bill states that government property identified as waqf will cease to be so.
- The Collector will determine ownership in cases of uncertainty and update revenue records if deemed government property.

Powers and authority:

• Determination of Waqf property

- Original act: Empowered Waqf Boards to determine if a property is waqf.
- Amendment bill: Removes this provision; no longer will Waqf Boards have the authority to make such determinations.

• Survey of Waqf properties

- Original act: Appointed a Survey Commissioner and additional commissioners.
- Amendment bill: Empowers Collectors to conduct surveys of waqf properties, with pending surveys to be conducted under state revenue laws.

• Central Waqf council

- Original Act: Constituted the Central Waqf Council with only Muslim members, including women.
- Amendment Bill: Changes the composition:
 - Two members must be non-Muslims.
 - MPs, former judges, and eminent persons need not be Muslims.
 - Muslim members must include representatives of Muslim organizations, scholars in Islamic law, and chairpersons of Waqf Boards. Two must be women.

• Waqf Boards:

- Original act: Provided for the election of up to two members each from electoral colleges of MPs, MLAs, MLCs, and Bar Council members.
- Amendment bill:
 - Empowers state governments to nominate one person from each group, who need not be Muslim.
 - Boards must include two non-Muslim members and at least one member each from Shias, Sunnis, and Backward classes of Muslims, as well as Bohra and Agakhani communities if relevant.
 - The original act provides that at least two members must be women. The Bill states that two Muslim members must be women.

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- Original Act: Allowed separate Waqf Boards for Sunni and Shia sects if they constituted more than 15% of waqf properties or waqf income in the state.
- Amendment Bill: Extends this provision to include separate boards for Aghakhani and Bohra sects.

Tribunals and appeals:

- **Composition of tribunals:**

- Original act: Required a Tribunal chairman to be a Judge of specified ranks and included a knowledgeable person in Muslim law.
- **Amendment bill:**
 - Chairman must be a current or former District Court judge.
 - Other member to be a current or former officer of the rank of joint secretary.

- **Appeals:**

- Original act: Decisions of the Tribunal were final with no appeal options.
- Amendment bill: Tribunal decisions can be appealed in the High Court within 90 days.

Powers of the Central government:

- Original act: Allowed state governments to audit waqf accounts at any time.
- Amendment bill: Empowers the central government to oversee audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) or a designated officer.

Rationale for the Amendment:

- The amendment seeks to address concerns about the unchecked powers of Waqf Boards, which have led to extensive land claims and disputes.
- For instance, in September 2022, the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board claimed the entire Thiruchendurai village, predominantly Hindu, highlighting the need for more stringent regulations and transparency.

Objectives

- **Transparency:** Requires mandatory verification for all property claims by Waqf Boards to ensure transparency.
- **Gender Diversity:** Modifies the composition of Waqf Boards to include more women representatives.
- **Revised verification procedures:** Introduces new procedures for verifying Waqf properties to prevent misuse and disputes, with district magistrates overseeing these processes.

- **Limited powers:** Aims to curb the extensive powers of Waqf Boards to prevent misuse and ensure proper management of waqf properties.

CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

- **Reduced powers:** The Bill diminishes the authority of State Waqf Boards, adversely impacting their ability to manage and oversee Waqf properties. This reduction in power undermines the effectiveness of these Boards in fulfilling their functions.
- **Minority Rights:** There are apprehensions that the Bill may negatively affect the interests of Muslim communities who rely on Waqf properties for religious and charitable purposes. The changes might harm the ability of these communities to manage their assets effectively.
- **Increased government control:** The increased involvement of district magistrates and other government officials in overseeing Waqf properties may lead to excessive bureaucratic interference. This heightened control could compromise the autonomy traditionally enjoyed by Waqf institutions.
- **Potential encroachment:** The Bill's provisions for government oversight in Waqf property management might be seen as an encroachment on religious autonomy. The role of district magistrates and other officials could be perceived as intruding into religious matters.
- **Potential for disputes:** The new verification processes, including the involvement of district magistrates, could lead to increased disputes and complications. The introduction of additional bureaucratic steps might exacerbate existing issues rather than resolving them.
- **Changes to Family waqf regulations:** The Bill's requirement that family waqfs (waqf-alal-aulad) be created only after fulfilling the rights of all heirs could hinder the creation of such waqfs. This contrasts with other legal frameworks that allow for similar arrangements.
- **Derecognition of certain waqfs:** The Bill attempts to derecognize waqfs that are categorized as 'waqf by user' or 'waqf by reputation,' potentially leading to legal and administrative challenges. This could create opportunities for unscrupulous individuals to exploit the situation.

- **Abolition of the Office of Survey Commissioner of Waqf:** The proposed replacement of the Survey Commissioner of Waqf with district collectors could lead to inefficiencies and complications. The collectors' existing responsibilities may detract from their ability to manage Waqf property surveys effectively.
- **Changes in Tribunal and appeals procedures :** The Bill proposes changes to tribunal procedures, including an increase in the time allowed for raising objections. This could lead to delays and a rise in the number of cases, potentially complicating the resolution process.
- **Composition and functioning of Waqf bodies:** The Bill's changes to the composition of the Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards, including the nomination of non-Muslims, could disrupt the existing balance and effectiveness of these bodies. The inclusion of local body members in the Waqf Boards might dilute their focus and expertise.
- **Restrictions on non-Muslim donations:** The Bill seeks to bar non-Muslims from donating to Waqf institutions, despite their potential support for various Muslim charitable causes. This provision conflicts with the inclusive nature of Islamic law and Indian syncretic culture.

WAQF ACT 1955**Waqf Law:**

- **Waqf, literally meaning 'detention' or 'confinement,'** refers to the permanent dedication of property for religious or charitable purposes in Islam.
- Once a property is designated as Waqf, its use is restricted solely to these purposes, and any other use or sale is prohibited.
- **Under Sharia law, Waqf property remains dedicated to its purpose indefinitely.**

History:

- **Delhi sultanate:**
 - The concept of Waqf in India dates back over 900 years to the early Delhi Sultanate.
 - During this period, two villages were dedicated to the Jama Masjid of Multan and entrusted its administration to Shaikhul Islam.
 - The establishment of Waqf properties increased with the expansion of Islamic rule across India.
- **Colonial period:**

- In the late 19th century, a legal challenge to Waqf properties arose when a dispute reached the Privy Council in London.
- The council described Waqf as 'a perpetuity of the worst and most pernicious kind' and declared it invalid.
- **This ruling was later overturned in India with the enactment of the Mussalman Waqf Validating Act of 1913, which preserved Waqf properties.**
- **Post-Independence:**
 - The Waqf Act was first enacted by Parliament in 1954.
 - **This Act was repealed and replaced by a new Waqf Act in 1995, which enhanced the powers of Waqf Boards.**
 - **In 2013, amendments** were made to grant the Waqf Boards even greater authority to designate properties as Waqf.
- **The Waqf Board of India is now the third-largest landholder in the country,** following the Railways and the Defence Department.

WAQF ACT, 1995

- The Waqf Act, 1995, regulates the administration of Waqf properties.
- It defines Waqf as the permanent dedication of movable or immovable properties for religious, pious, or charitable purposes as recognized by Muslim law.
- These properties are endowed to benefit the needy and fund various institutions such as educational establishments, graveyards, mosques, and shelters.
- **Once a property is designated as Waqf, it becomes non-transferable** and remains dedicated as a charitable act toward God, essentially transferring ownership to the divine.

Management of properties:

- **A Survey Commissioner is responsible for listing Waqf properties** by conducting local investigations and reviewing public documents.
- Waqf properties are managed by **a mutawali, who oversees their administration.**
- Unlike trusts under the Indian Trusts Act of 1882, **Waqfs are intended to be perpetual and dedicated to specific charitable or religious purposes.**

Creation and ownership:

- To establish a Waqf, **the individual (Waqif) must be of sound mind and hold valid ownership of the property**
- Interestingly, the **Waqif does not need to be Muslim, provided they believe in Islamic principles.**

WAQF BOARD

- The Waqf Board is a legal body capable of acquiring, holding, and transferring property. It can also engage in legal proceedings.
- The board manages Waqf properties, recovers lost properties, and authorizes transactions involving immovable Waqf properties, requiring approval from at least two-thirds of its members.
- **Established in 1964, the Central Waqf Council oversees and advises state-level Waqf Boards across India.**

JAIPUR'S UNESCO STATUS TO BE ENHANCED WITH ₹100 CRORE PLAN

#HERITAGEANDCULTURE #WHS #UNESCO
#RAJPUTRULERS

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

The conservation and development of Jaipur's Walled City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2019, will be funded with ₹100 crore. The initiative will focus on enhancing infrastructure while preserving the city's architectural heritage and vibrant culture.

MORE INFORMATION FROM THE NEWS ARTICLE

- Known for its pink facade buildings, the Walled City's heritage status reflects its distinctive **grid-based street layout with colonnades that form large public squares called chaupars.**
- The city's urban planning integrates ancient Hindu, Mughal, and Western architectural influences.
- The conservation efforts are anticipated to enhance tourism, support the local economy, and improve infrastructure.
- The Walled City is renowned for its landmarks, including the 400-year-old Man Sagar Lake, City Palace,

Tripolia Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Sanganeri Gate, Zorawar Singh Gate, Jantar Mantar Observatory.

- It also features *Maota Lake at the base of the historic Amber Palace, the Maharaja School of Arts & Crafts (now the Museum of Legacies) in Kishanpole Bazaar, and the Hawa Mahal, Jaipur's most iconic landmark.*
- **Founded by Sawai Jai Singh II, the Kachwaha Rajput ruler of Amber,** the historic fortified city of Jaipur was laid out on the plains with a grid plan inspired by Vedic architecture.
- As the capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur has preserved its local commercial, artisanal, and cooperative traditions in their original form.

Note:

- Jaipur became the **second Indian city, after Ahmedabad, to receive the UNESCO World Heritage City status.**
- This recognition was granted during the 43rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC), held in Baku, Azerbaijan in **2019.**
- **Ahmedabad, Gujarat:**
 - Ahmedabad holds the distinction of being the **first Indian city to receive UNESCO World Heritage City status in July 2017.**
 - This recognition celebrates its rich architectural, historical, and cultural significance.
 - **Founded in 1411 by Sultan Ahmad Shah I,** Ahmedabad served as the capital of Gujarat for six centuries, showcasing a continuous historical narrative.
 - The city is renowned for its unique blend of Islamic, Hindu, and Jain architectural styles.
 - Notable landmarks include *Bhadra Fort, Jama Masjid, Sarkhej Roza, and many traditional havelis (wooden houses).*
 - Ahmedabad's historic pols (gated residential areas) reflect intricate wooden architecture and community living.
 - Dubbed the **'Manchester of the East,' Ahmedabad is famous for its thriving textile industry,** which plays a significant role in the city's economy and culture.



(Sawai Jai Singh II)

ABOUT SAWAI JAI SINGH II

- **Sawai Jai Singh II (1688-1743) was the Rajput ruler of the Kingdom of Amber**, who later founded the fortified city of Jaipur and established it as his capital.
- Ascending to the throne at the age of 11 in 1699, **Jai Singh initially served as a vassal of the Mughal Empire.**
- The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb honoured him with the title '**Sawai**,' meaning **one and a quarter-times superior to his contemporaries, before the siege of Khelna Fort in the Deccan.**
- In 1721, he was granted the title *Saramad-i-Raja-i-Hindustan*, followed by *Maharaja Sawai, Raj Rajeshwar, Shri Rajadhiraj* in 1723.
- Later in his life, Jai Singh II sought independence from Mughal dominance and asserted his sovereignty by reviving the ancient Ashvamedha sacrifice, a ritual that had been abandoned for centuries.
- He shifted his kingdom's capital from **Amber to the newly established city of Jaipur.**

Situation during his accession:

- Upon ascending the ancestral throne of Amber, Jai Singh II faced a dire situation, with insufficient resources to maintain even a modest force of 1,000 cavalry.
- This challenging circumstance had developed over the preceding 96 years, coinciding with the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

- Given Amber's proximity to Mughal power centres in Delhi and Agra, **the Jaipur rulers had historically relied on diplomacy rather than military action** in their interactions with the Mughals.
- Six months after his accession, **Aurangzeb ordered Jai Singh to serve in the Deccan Wars.**
- Jai Singh eventually reached Burhanpur, but could not advance further due to heavy rains. His rank and pay were further reduced by 500.
- Despite his military achievements at the **siege of Khelna in 1702, Jai Singh's reward was limited to the restoration of his previous rank and the conferral of the title 'Sawai.'**
- **Relations with later Mughals:**
 - Aurangzeb's death in 1707 initially exacerbated Jai Singh's difficulties, as his patrons, Bidar Bakht and his father Azam, were defeated in the Mughal succession war.
 - Jai Singh responded by **forming alliances with the Rajput states of Mewar (through marriage) and Marwar against the new Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah I.**

RELATIONS WITH THE MARATHAS

- Jai Singh governed Malwa three times between 1714 and 1737.
- **During his first term (1714-1717),** he successfully repelled Maratha incursions.
- However, by 1728, Peshwa Baji Rao's victory over the Nizam of Hyderabad allowed the Marathas to establish a foothold in the region.
- **In his second tenure (1729-1730),** facing a weakened Mughal Empire, Jai Singh sought to negotiate with Shahu, the Maratha ruler, to restore Mughal authority but was soon recalled to Rajputana.
- **In his final term (1732-1737),** he urged Emperor Muhammad Shah to compromise with the Marathas.
- Despite his efforts, court opposition led to his removal, and **Malwa eventually fell to the Marathas in 1738 following a defeat of his successor, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah.**

FORTIFICATIONS

- Amid the declining Mughal authority, Persian ruler Nadir Shah invaded and sacked Delhi in 1739.
- Throughout this period of upheaval, Jai Singh remained within his state but was far from passive.

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- **Anticipating further instability, he launched an extensive program of fortification throughout Jaipur's territories.**
- To this day, many of the fortifications around the former Jaipur state are attributed to the reign of Jai Singh II.

CONTRIBUTIONS**1.Revival of Ancient Vedic practices and reforms:**

- Sawai Jai Singh II revived ancient Vedic ceremonies, including the Ashwamedha sacrifice in 1716 and the Vajapeya in 1734, which had not been performed for many generations.
- **An adherent of the Nimbarka Sampradaya of the Vaishnava sect, Jai Singh actively promoted Sanskrit learning and initiated significant social reforms, such as the abolition of Sati.**
- He also successfully **lobbied for the abolition of the Jaziya tax imposed on Hindus by Aurangzeb in 1679, which Emperor Muhammad Shah finally revoked in 1720.**
- In 1728, he further convinced the **emperor to eliminate the pilgrimage tax on Hindus visiting Gaya.**

2.Astronomy and Science:

- Motivated by a desire to advance the nation's understanding of astronomy, Jai Singh established **five observatories** across India in **Delhi, Mathura, Benares, Ujjain, and his capital Jaipur, despite ongoing local conflicts and foreign invasions.**
- These observatories, collectively known as **Jantar Mantar, were equipped with advanced instruments** such as the Ram Yantra, Jai Prakash, Samrat Yantra, Digamsha Yantra, and Narivalaya Yantra, which allowed for highly accurate astronomical observations.
- He compiled a set of astronomical tables, **'Zij-i-Muhammadshahi,' and oversaw the translation of Euclid's 'Elements of Geometry,'** as well as works on trigonometry and logarithms into **Sanskrit.**
- His observatories, relying primarily on Indian astronomy, were used to accurately predict eclipses and other celestial events.

3.The City of Jaipur:

- One of Jai Singh's greatest achievements was the construction of Jaipur, originally called Jai Nagara,

which became known as the 'City of Victory' and later as the 'Pink City'.

- Construction began in 1725, and the city was **officially established as the capital of the Kachwaha dynasty in 1733, replacing Amber.**
- Jai Singh, while planning the layout of Jaipur, consulted numerous architects **and founded the city based on the principles of Vastu Shastra and Shilpa Shastra, under the architectural guidance of Vidyadhar Bhattacharya.**
- The city became a commercial hub, attracting merchants from across India who sought the safety and prosperity offered by its thick protective walls and a garrison of 17,000 troops.
- Later, **during the reign of Sawai Ram Singh II, Jaipur was painted pink to welcome Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1876.**
- The city's avenues have retained their pink hue, earning Jaipur the nickname 'Pink City.'



(Location of Amber, 1525, with neighbouring polities, on the eve of the establishment of the Mughal Empire)

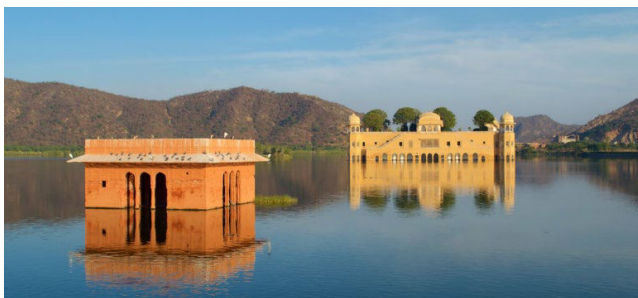
THE KINGDOM OF AMBER

- Later known as Jaipur State, was situated in the **north-eastern Dhundhar region of Rajputana and was governed by the Kachwaha Rajput clan.**
- It was founded in the **12th century by Dulha Rai, who was likely the last ruler of the Kachchhapaghata dynasty of Gwalior.**

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- He established his rule in Dausa with the support of the Chahamanas of Shakambhari.
- The kingdom experienced a period of stagnation from the **12th to the 15th centuries, with limited historical records.**
- Under **Raja Bharmal, the kingdom forged a strong alliance with the Mughal Empire**, marked by his daughter's marriage to Emperor Akbar.
- Bharmal's son, **Raja Bhagwant Das, and grandson, Raja Man Singh I, emerged as prominent generals in Akbar's army**, contributing significantly to the expansion of the Mughal Empire.
- Later, **Mirza Raja Jai Singh I served under Shah Jahan and became a distinguished general** but fell out of favour with Aurangzeb in 1664 due to his suspected involvement in Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's escape from Mughal captivity.
- Sawai Jai Singh II ruled during the decline of the Mughal Empire, successfully rebelling against Mughal authority in 1708 to reclaim his confiscated territories.
- However, after his death, the kingdom faced economic difficulties due to a civil war between his sons Ishwari Singh and Madho Singh I, as well as pressures from the Marathas.
- **In 1818, following the Third Anglo-Maratha War**, the kingdom became a princely state under British rule by signing a treaty that established a **subsidiary alliance with the East India Company.**
- It acceded to **independent India in 1947** and was officially **integrated into the nation by 1949.**

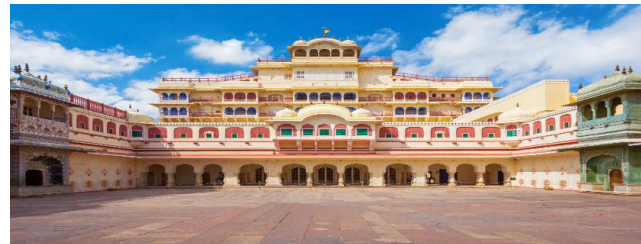
SOME OF THE IMPORTANT MONUMENTS IN JAIPUR



MAN SAGAR LAKE

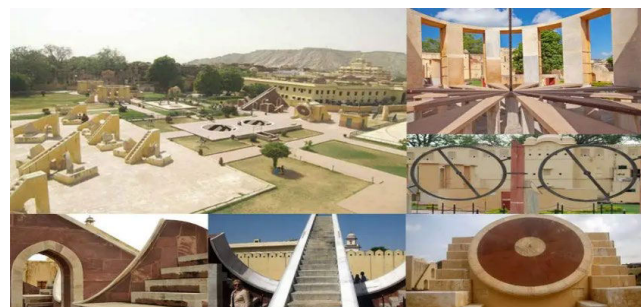
- Man Sagar Lake, an **artificial reservoir, boasts a history of over 400 years.**
- Constructed around **1610 by Raja Man Singh, the then ruler of Amer**, the lake was created by **damming the Dravyavati River.**

- Its purpose was to enhance water supply and irrigation in the region.
- The lake is bordered by the **Aravalli hills on the north, west, and east, while the southern side features densely populated plains.**
- A key feature of Man Sagar Lake is **the Jal Mahal**, a palace situated in the lake's centre, offering a picturesque view.



CITY PALACE

- The City Palace served as both a **royal residence and the administrative headquarters of the Jaipur State**
- Its **construction began shortly after the city of Jaipur was founded under Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II**, who relocated his court from Amber to Jaipur in 1727.
- The palace was completed in 1732 and continued to function as the ceremonial and administrative centre of the Maharaja of Jaipur until 1949, when Jaipur became part of the newly formed Indian state of Rajasthan.
- The palace's design reflects a **blend of Mughal and Rajput architectural styles.**



JANTAR MANTAR OBSERVATORY

- The Jantar Mantar is an **exceptional collection of 19 astronomical instruments** commissioned by Sawai Jai Singh II.
- **Completed in 1734, this observatory is renowned for housing the world's largest stone sundial and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- Situated close to the City Palace and Hawa Mahal, the Jantar Mantar allows for the naked-eye observation of celestial positions
- It also follows three classical celestial coordinates to track the positions of heavenly bodies- namely **the horizon-zenith local system, the equatorial system, and the ecliptic system.**
- The **main aim of Jai Singh II was to refine the ancient Islamic zij tables, to measure the exact hour continuously, and to define the calendar in a more precise manner.** Therefore this observatory is an **example of the Ptolemaic positional astronomy which was an example to many civilizations.**

**AMBER FORT****History:**

- The settlement was originally founded by **Raja Alan Singh of the Chanda clan in 967 CE.**
- The Amber Fort, as it stands today, was constructed over the remnants of this earlier structure **during the reign of Raja Man Singh, a Kachwaha King of Amer.**
- His descendant, **Jai Singh I, further expanded the fort.**
- The fort's significance continued until 1727 **when the Kachwahas shifted their capital to Jaipur under the rule of Sawai Jai Singh II.**
- Despite this transition, the Fort remained a prominent site and continued to be a symbol of Rajput grandeur.

Architectural features:

- The present structure showcases **Rajput architecture with Mughal influences.**
- Constructed from **red sandstone and marble**, the fort is renowned for its opulence and grandeur.
- The fort is divided into sections, each with its own gate and courtyard:

- **Suraj Pol (Sun Gate):** The primary entrance to the fort.
- **Diwan-e-Am (Hall of Public Audience):** Features a pillared hall and a two-tiered gateway known as Ganesh Pol.
- **Dil-e-Aaram Garden:** A Mughal-style-garden leading to the Diwan-e-Am, characterized by latticed galleries and double-rowed columns with elephant-shaped capitals.
- **Diwan-e-Khas (Hall of Private Audience):** An exclusive area for private meetings.
- Within the fort, two prominent buildings are located opposite each other in a separate courtyard:
 - **Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace):** Renowned for its intricate mirror work.
 - **Jai Mandir:** A beautiful structure complementing the Sheesh Mahal, both forming part of the 'Zenana' (women's quarters). This area was designed to ensure privacy for the kings and their queens.
- **Religious significance:**
 - Near the Ganesh Gate, **there is a temple dedicated to Shila Devi, a goddess from the Chaitanya cult, given to Raja Man Singh** after his victory over the Raja of Jessore in 1604 (present-day Bangladesh).
- **UNESCO recognition:**
 - In June 2013, the *Amber Fort, along with five other forts in Rajasthan (Chittor Fort, Gagron Fort, Jaisalmer Fort, Kumbhalgarh, and Ranthambore Fort),* was included in **the UNESCO World Heritage Site list.**
 - These forts were recognized for their exemplary **Rajput military hill architecture and cultural significance.**

**HAWA MAHAL**

- The Hawa Mahal, or 'Palace of Winds,' is a distinctive palace.

- Built from **red and pink sandstone**, it is strategically located on the edge of the City Palace.
- This iconic structure, **completed in 1799**, is celebrated for its unique architectural features and its role as a symbol of Jaipur's rich heritage.

History:

- **Constructed by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh, the grandson of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh**, the Hawa Mahal was inspired by the Khetri Mahal's distinctive architecture.

Architectural feature:

- The Hawa Mahal was designed by the **architect Lal Chand Ustad**.
- Its façade, **resembling a honeycomb**, consists of **953 small windows**, known as **Jharokhas**, adorned with intricate latticework.
- This lattice design served a dual purpose:
 - **allowing royal women to observe** street life and festivals without being seen, and
 - facilitating a **natural cooling effect through the Venturi effect**, making the interior more comfortable during the hot summer months.
- The palace's five-story exterior is a visual masterpiece, with each Jharokha showcasing delicate carvings.
- Its design reflects **a fusion of Hindu Rajput and Islamic Mughal architectural styles**.
 - **The Rajput influence** is evident in the domed canopies, fluted pillars, and floral motifs;
 - **While the Mughal influence** is visible in the stone inlay work and arches, reminiscent of the Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri.

TEACHER'S DAY 2024 IN INDIA

#PERSONALITIES #HISTORY



*Teacher's Day in India is observed annually on September 5th, honouring the profound contributions of educators in shaping society. This date marks the **birth anniversary of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the second President of India and a distinguished scholar and philosopher born on***

September 5, 1888. *The Theme for Teachers Day 2024 is 'Empowering Educators for a Sustainable Future.'*

BEGINNING OF TEACHER'S DAY CELEBRATION

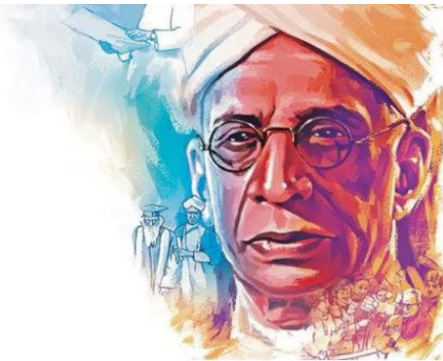
- The tradition began on **DR. Radhakrishnan's 77th birthday in 1962**.
- When approached by his students with a request to celebrate his birthday, DR. Radhakrishnan suggested that instead of a personal celebration, **the day be dedicated to honouring teachers across the nation**.
- This proposal was well-received, **leading to the establishment of September 5 as Teacher's Day in India**.
- DR. Radhakrishnan's belief **in the transformative power of education and the essential role of teachers in shaping both individuals and the nation** underpins the significance of this day.

NATIONAL TEACHERS' AWARD

- A significant highlight of Teacher's Day is the **presentation of the National Teachers' Award (NTA) by the President of India**.
- **Established in 1958**, this award honours outstanding teachers and headmasters who have made exceptional contributions to improving education and enriching students' learning experiences.
- **In 2024, 82 teachers were selected to receive the NTA**. This prestigious award recognizes their remarkable contributions to education and their positive impact on students' lives.
- **Each recipient is awarded a certificate of merit, a cash prize of Rs. 50,000, and a silver medal**.
- **The selection process** for the NTA is rigorous and involves three stages:
 1. District Level Evaluation
 2. State Level Evaluation
 3. National Level Evaluation
- Teachers are chosen through this detailed process conducted by **the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education**.
- To be eligible for the National Teachers' Award, candidates **must meet the following criteria**:
 - **Position:** Must be regular teachers or heads of recognized primary, middle, high, and higher secondary schools. This includes schools run by

State Governments, Union Territories, and those affiliated with educational boards like the CBSE.

- **Service Duration:** A minimum of ten years of service is required.
- **Non-Eligibility criteria:**
 - Teachers or heads of schools involved in private tuition.
 - Contractual teachers and Shiksha Mitras.
 - Educational administrators, inspectors of education, or staff members of training institutes.
- **Evaluation criteria:**
 - **Objective Criteria (10% of the total score):** Evaluates teachers based on specific, measurable factors.
 - **Performance-Based Criteria (90% of the total score):** Assesses teachers' initiatives to enhance learning outcomes, innovative practices, and other performance-related aspects.



ABOUT DR. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN (1888-1975)

- Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, **born in Tiruttani (now part of the Tiruvallur district in Tamil Nadu)**, was a distinguished scholar and philosopher.
- He was born as **Sarvepalli Radhakrishnayya** into a Telugu Niyogi Brahmin family.
- In 1896, he continued his studies at the Hermansburg Evangelical Lutheran Mission School in Tirupati and later attended Government High Secondary School.
- His family's modest background did not hinder his pursuit of education and intellectual growth.

ACADEMIC CAREER

- Radhakrishnan's academic career began with his appointment to the **Department of Philosophy at Madras Presidency College in April 1909.**

- **In 1918, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Mysore**, where he taught at Maharaja's College.
- During this period, he wrote extensively for esteemed journals such as **The Quest, Journal of Philosophy, and the International Journal of Ethics.**
- His scholarly work included his first book, **The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore**, in which he **praised Tagore's philosophy** as a genuine manifestation of the Indian spirit.
- His second book, **The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy**, was published in 1920.
- In 1921, Radhakrishnan was appointed to the **King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science** at the University of Calcutta.
- His contributions to education were recognized when he was **knighted by George V in June 1931**, although he ceased using the title after Indian independence, **preferring his academic title of 'Doctor.'**
- **From 1931 to 1936, Radhakrishnan served as the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University.** During his first convocation address, he praised the progressive nature of Andhra and its potential for unity, highlighting its openness, moral sense, and relative freedom for women.
- In 1936, he was named Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at the University of Oxford and elected a Fellow of All Souls College.
- His academic excellence was further recognized with **nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936 and 1937, continuing throughout the 1960s.**

PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Advaita Vedanta and contemporary interpretation:

- Radhakrishnan's philosophical framework was deeply rooted in Advaita Vedanta, which he reinterpreted to fit contemporary understanding.
- He **advanced the philosophy of oneness**, emphasizing the unity of all creation and promoting a **spirit of non-difference (Abheda), love, and brotherhood.**
- His perspective on Advaita Vedanta positioned it as the pinnacle of religious experience, hierarchically above other religions based on their apprehension of spiritual truth.

Defence of Hinduism:

- Radhakrishnan was a staunch defender of Hinduism against Western criticism.
- He sought to reshape contemporary Hindu identity by addressing and countering uninformed critiques
- His critical engagement with Christian criticisms of Hinduism, encouraged by his academic experiences, **led him to a deep study of Indian philosophy and a lifelong commitment to defending Hinduism.**
- Despite his critiques, he maintained respect for his critics, such as Professor Hogg, and dedicated works to those who supported his early career.

The Spirit of Abhedha:

- In his work **The Ethics of the Vedanta**, Radhakrishnan responded to critiques suggesting that Vedanta lacked an ethical dimension.
- **He quoted Max Muller to argue that Vedanta inherently incorporates ethics throughout its teachings.**
- Radhakrishnan introduced the concept of **'The Spirit of Abhedha,'** advocating for viewing all beings as non-different and equal.
- He emphasized that **Vedanta requires respect for human dignity and recognition of each individual as an end in themselves,** fostering ethics grounded in love and brotherhood.

Neo-Vedanta:

- Radhakrishnan was a prominent proponent of **Neo-Vedanta, reinterpreting traditional Advaita Vedanta for modern contexts.**
- While he upheld the reality and diversity of the experiential world, **he redefined Shankara's notion of maya as a subjective misperception rather than strict idealism.**
- This approach allowed him to **address contemporary philosophical and metaphysical questions** while retaining the core principles of Advaita Vedanta.

Intuition and religious experience:

- Radhakrishnan placed significant emphasis on intuition, or religious experience, as a vital source of knowledge beyond conscious thought.
- He regarded such experiences as integral to understanding and engaging with philosophical and spiritual truths.

Influence:

- Radhakrishnan's work has had a profound impact on both Indian and Western thought.
- His efforts to present Hinduism in a **more accessible manner to Western audiences contributed to its influence on modern spirituality.**

POLITICAL CAREER

- Radhakrishnan embarked on his political career relatively late, following a distinguished academic tenure.
- In 1928, he supported the **renaming of the Ceded Districts of Madras Presidency to Rayalaseema at the Andhra Mahasabha.**
- By 1931, his reputation had earned him a **nomination to the League of Nations Committee for Intellectual Cooperation,** where he was recognized as a **leading Hindu authority and a persuasive advocate of Eastern institutions in modern society.**
- In the **Constituent Assembly,** Radhakrishnan **advocated against state institutions imparting denominational religious instruction,** arguing that such practices were contrary to the secular vision of the Indian State.
- Following India's independence in 1947, Radhakrishnan's political roles expanded significantly.
 - He represented India at **UNESCO from 1946 to 1952** and **served as India's Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1949 to 1952.**
 - In 1952, he was elected as the **first Vice President of India** and later became the **second President of India, serving from 1962 to 1967.**
- In addition to his domestic roles, **Radhakrishnan, alongside Albert Einstein, was a sponsor of the Peoples' World Convention (PWC) or Peoples' World Constituent Assembly (PWCA),** which convened in 1950-51 at Palais Electoral, Geneva.
 - This engagement underscored his commitment to global policy and intellectual discourse on a worldwide stage.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- **Bharat Ratna (India, 1954):** India's highest civilian award, given for exceptional service in various fields.
- **Order of the Aztec Eagle (Mexico, 1954):** Mexico's highest civilian honour, awarded with the Sash First

Class, recognizing his contributions to international understanding.

- **Pour le Merite (Germany, 1954):** Awarded for outstanding contributions to the fields of Sciences and Arts.
- **Order of Merit (United Kingdom, 1963):** Granted as an Honorary Member, acknowledging his significant global contributions.
- **Templeton Prize (1975):** Awarded shortly before his death, this prize recognized his contributions to spiritual understanding and philosophy.
- **Note:** Radhakrishnan was also honoured with the title of Knight Bachelor by the British Government in 1931. However, following India's independence in 1947, he chose not to use the title 'Sir' and preferred his academic designation.

QUOTES ATTRIBUTED TO SARVEPALLI

RADHAKRISHNAN

- *It is not God that is worshipped but the authority that claims to speak in His name. Sin becomes disobedience to authority, not violation of integrity.*
- *Reading a book gives us the habit of solitary reflection and true enjoyment.*
- *When we think we know, we cease to learn.*
- *A literary genius, it is said, resembles all, though no one resembles him.*
- *There is nothing wonderful in my saying that Jainism was in existence long before the Vedas were composed.*
- *A life of joy and happiness is possible only on the basis of knowledge.*
- *If he does not fight, it is not because he rejects all fighting as futile, but because he has finished his fights. He has overcome all dissensions between himself and the world and is now at rest. We shall have wars and soldiers so long as the brute in us is untamed.*

WORKS OF SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore; The Hindu Dharma; Indian Religious Thought; Religion, Science and Culture; An Idealist View of Life; Kalki, or the Future of Civilization; Gautama the Buddha; Eastern Religions and Western Thought; Religion and Society; The Dhammapada; The Principal Upanishads; Recovery of Faith; A Source Book in

Indian Philosophy; The Brahma Sutra: The Philosophy of Spiritual Life

THE GREAT STUPA OF SANCHI

#BUDDHISTARCHITECTURE #ASHOKA

#ARTANDCULTURE #STUPAART

PRIMARY SOURCE *The Indian EXPRESS*

*In December 2022, the Humboldt Forum Museum in Berlin, Germany, unveiled an intricately designed red sandstone gateway, a 1:1 replica of the original **East Gate of Sanchi's Great Stupa**. At nearly 10 metres tall, 6 metres wide, and weighing around 150 tonnes, this reproduction reflects the detailed craftsmanship of the ancient structure. Its significance was highlighted by a visit from India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, emphasizing the ongoing cultural dialogue between India and Germany.*

STUPA

- A stupa is a **commemorative monument** usually containing sacred relics of the Buddha or other venerable saints.
- **The archetypal/typical stupa is a hemispherical structure**, whose origins can be traced to pre-Buddhist burial mounds found in India.
- The Great Stupa of Sanchi exemplifies this form.



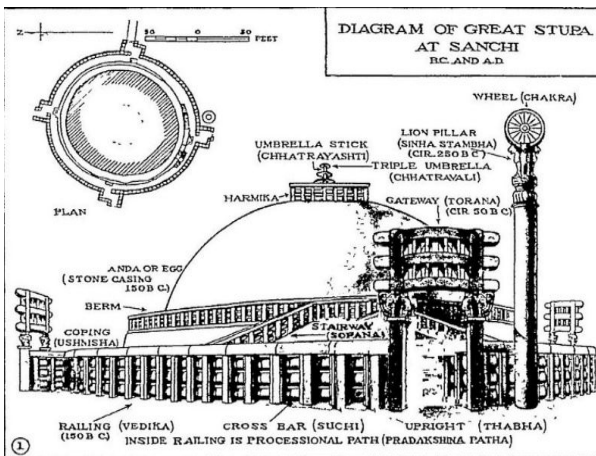
SANCHI STUPA

- **Location:** Raisen District of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Sanchi complex was in a state of profound disrepair when it was first encountered by **British officer Henry Taylor in 1818**.
- This discovery led to a renewed interest in the site, which was subsequently formally surveyed and

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

excavated by **Alexander Cunningham**, the founder of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, in 1851.

- The restoration of the site to its current condition was overseen by **ASI Director-General John Marshall** during the **1910s**, with crucial financial support from the begums of Bhopal.
- The most recent construction in Sanchi can be dated to as late as the **twelfth century CE**.
- The Great Stupa is **one of the oldest standing stone structures in India**, believed to have been built over the **Buddha's relics**.
- The development of the Sanchi complex was supported by patronage from **Vidisha's mercantile community**.
- The Great Stupa and Sanchi's other Buddhist monuments were collectively **designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1989**.
- The Sanchi Stupa is featured on the **reverse side of the ₹200 Indian currency** note to highlight its significance as a cornerstone of Indian cultural heritage.

**COMMISSIONED BY EMPEROR ASHOKA**

- The Sanchi Stupa was originally commissioned by the **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE**.
- The initial design of the stupa featured a simple hemispherical **brick dome constructed over the relics of the Buddha**.
- This early form was crowned with a **Chatra**, a **symbolizing high rank**, intended to honour and protect the sacred relics of Buddha.
- **Ashoka's wife Devi** was a merchant's daughter from nearby Vidisha and a native of Sanchi, oversaw the construction.

Expansions:

- In the **1st century BCE**, significant enhancements were made to the original stupa.
- **Four elaborately carved Toranas (ornamental gateways)** and a **balustrade** (railing or barrier supported by a series of vertical posts) encircling the structure were added.
- These additions marked the stupa's transition from its Mauryan origins to a more ornate and decorative phase.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

- Subsequent rulers, **particularly the Shungas and Satavahanas**, expanded and embellished the stupa.
- During the **Shunga period**, the stupa was **significantly enlarged with stone slabs**, increasing its size to nearly twice its original diameter.
- The dome was flattened near the top and **crowned with three superimposed parasols**, set within a square railing, **symbolizing the Dharma, or Wheel of the Law**.
- The high circular drum supporting the dome was designed **for circumambulation (Pradakshinapath) and accessible via a double staircase**, complemented by a stone balustrade enclosing a second pathway at ground level.
- The railings surrounding **Stupa 1**, dating to around **150 BCE or 175–125 BCE**, are composed of plain stone slabs with dedicatory inscriptions.
- These railings, though made of stone, mimic a wooden prototype, evident from the slanted joints resembling those in wood rather than vertical cuts typical of stonework.
- The railings also feature **short donor inscriptions in Brahmi script**, with **additional inscriptions added during the Gupta Period**.

SATAVAHANA CONTRIBUTIONS

- The Satavahana Empire, **under the rule of Satakarni II**, **conquered eastern Malwa from the Shungas**, **gaining control over the Sanchi site**.
- The Satavahanas are credited with constructing the **ornate gateways around the original Mauryan and Shunga stupas**.

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- The **1st century BCE** saw the introduction of highly **decorated gateways**, which were also coloured.
- An inscription in **Brahmi script**, the **Siri-Satakani inscription**, commemorates the donation of one of the top lintels of the Southern Gateway by the **artisans of King Satakarni II**, reflecting the ongoing patronage and cultural significance of the site.

GATEWAYS OF THE GREAT STUPA

- The Great Stupa at Sanchi is renowned not just for its hemispherical dome crowned with a **chhatra** (parasol) **but also for its intricately carved ornamental gateways or toranas**.
- These gateways, constructed in the first century BCE during the Satavahana dynasty, serve as remarkable illustrations of Buddhist art and iconography.
- The Stupa is surrounded by four toranas, **each oriented towards one of the cardinal directions**.
- These gateways are composed of **two square pillars topped with capitals**, which support a superstructure.
- The pillars and lintels are adorned with elaborate bas reliefs and sculptures depicting scenes from the Buddha's life, stories from the Jataka Tales, and other Buddhist motifs.

1.Southern gateway:

- The Southern Gateway, **the first of the four to be erected**, is situated directly in front of the steps leading to the stupa's terrace.
- It is considered the main entrance to the stupa.
- The decorations emphasize the **role of Ashoka in spreading Buddhism**.

2.Northern gateway:

- The Northern Gateway, the second to be constructed, is the best-preserved of the four.
- It retains most of its original ornamental figures and provides a clear view of the artistic style used in all the gateways.
- This gateway features panels that narrate various events from the Buddha's life.

- A notable atypical panel depicts foreigners making a dedication at the Southern Gateway.

*(Eastern Gateway)***3.Eastern gateway:**

- The Eastern Gateway, constructed third, is particularly famous in Europe due to its plaster cast, **created by Lieutenant Henry Hardy Cole in the late 1860s**. This cast was widely distributed and displayed across Europe, including at the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- The upper lintel of the Eastern Gateway represents the seven **Manushi Buddhas**, with the historical Buddha being the latest.
- The middle lintel depicts the Great Departure, **where Prince Siddhartha leaves Kapilavastu**.
- The lower lintel portrays **Emperor Ashoka visiting the Bodhi tree**.
- Decorative elements include **shalabhanjika** (fertility emblems represented by a yakshi grasping a tree branch), elephants, winged lions, and peacocks.

4.Western gateway:

- The Western Gateway, the **last of the four to be built**, follows the same structural design as the other gateways, with two square pillars, capitals, and a superstructure of three architraves.

PORT BLAIR RENAMED AS SRI VIJAYA PURAM

#MODERHISTORY #FREEDOMSTRUGGLE

#MEDIEVALHISTORY #IMPERIALCHOLA



Port Blair has been renamed 'Sri Vijaya Puram' by the Government of India in an effort to move beyond its colonial legacy. The new name pays tribute to the region's historical

ties with the Srivijaya Empire. This renaming also symbolizes the triumph of India's freedom struggle, recognizing the unique and vital role the Andaman and Nicobar Islands played in that historic fight for independence.

INTRODUCTION

- Port Blair, the gateway to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, **was named after Archibald Blair, a naval surveyor and lieutenant in the Bombay Marine.**
- **Blair was the first to conduct a detailed survey of the Andaman Islands,** a crucial factor in the city's establishment.

Archibald Blair's early career and survey missions:

- Blair began his service in the Bombay Marine in 1771, embarking on numerous survey missions across the coasts of India, Iran, and Arabia.
- His work extended into various regions, **including the Chagos Archipelago, Diamond Harbour near Calcutta, and along the Hooghly River.**
- These early missions earned him a reputation as a skilled surveyor, leading to his involvement in a mission to the Andaman Islands.

The Survey of the Andaman Islands and naming of Port Cornwallis:

- In December **1778, Blair departed from Calcutta with two ships, the *Elizabeth* and the *Viper*, to explore the Andaman Islands.**
- His expedition, lasting until April 1779, navigated the west coast and subsequently the east coast of the islands.
- During this survey, Blair discovered a **natural harbour, which he initially named Port Cornwallis, after William Cornwallis, then Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Army.**
- Later the island was renamed after him.
- Recognizing the strategic importance of this harbour, Blair reported his **findings to the East India Company (EIC), who were impressed by the potential of the location.**
- **Colonization of the Andaman Islands:**
 - Following Blair's discovery, the EIC decided to **colonize the islands to establish a safe harbour to monitor and counter Malay pirate activities.**
 - Port Cornwallis would also serve as a refuge for shipwrecked sailors and as a shelter for British officers during hostilities with other powers.

- As part of the colonization process, **several convicts were transported to the islands to perform unpaid labor, and the region became a penal colony.**

• Decline of the first colony:

- In December 1792, for strategic reasons, the colony was shifted to the northeast part of the Andaman Islands, **and the new settlement was named Port Cornwallis.**
- However, this new colony did not last long, as the settlers faced severe disease outbreaks, resulting in numerous deaths.
- **By 1796, the East India Company ceased operations on the island due to the unsustainable living conditions.**

Port Blair and the revival of penal colony post-1857 revolt:

- The Revolt of 1857 changed the course of Port Blair's history.
- The British, now burdened with a large number of Indian prisoners, **decided to renovate and resettle Port Blair as a penal colony.**
- Many of these prisoners were given life sentences, with some being hanged, and others succumbing to disease and the harsh conditions of the settlement.
- With the rise of the Indian Independence Movement, the British constructed **a vast cellular jail in 1906, now infamously known as Kaala Paani.**
- This jail housed numerous Indian freedom fighters, including **Veer Damodar Savarkar, becoming a symbol of British colonial oppression.**

Certain facts:

- Port Blair, now officially known as Sri Vijaya Puram, serves as the **capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, a union territory of India situated in the **Bay of Bengal.**
- It functions as the headquarters of the **South Andaman** district.
- In addition to its civilian infrastructure, Port Blair is home to several strategic military installations.
- The Indian Navy's major naval base, **INS Jarawa, is located here**, along with air and sea bases operated by the Indian Coast Guard, Andaman and Nicobar Police, and the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

the first integrated tri-command of the Indian Armed Forces, comprising the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

In Indian freedom struggle movement:

- Netaji Subas Chandra Bose escaped British surveillance in Calcutta on January 16, 1941, and **returned to Indian soil nearly three years later, arriving at Port Blair Aerodrome on December 29, 1943.**
- **On 30 December 1943, Netaji hoisted the national flag for the first time on Indian soil, at Port Blair,** symbolizing the fulfilment of his promise that the Indian National Army (INA) would stand on Indian land by the end of 1943.
- This momentous visit also marked the declaration of the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the 'first liberated territory of India.'**
- **From 1943 to 44 during World War II, this territory served as the headquarters of the Azad Hind government under Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.** The island at the time was liberated from British rule by Japan which captured it during World War II.
- British forces eventually regained control of the **islands in October 1945.**
- To commemorate this significant event, a **Sankalp Smarak (Memorial of Resolve) was dedicated to the nation on December 29, 2021** (78 years after Bose's historic arrival in the Andamans).

CONNECTION WITH THE IMPERIAL CHOLAS AND SRIVIJAYA

- During the 11th century, the powerful **Chola emperor, Rajendra I,** used the Andaman Islands as a naval base to launch a significant military campaign against the **Srivijaya Empire (southern Sumatra), located in present-day Indonesia.**
- **Strategic importance:**
 - According to inscriptions found at Thanjavur dated to 1050 CE, the Cholas referred to the **Andaman Islands as Ma-Nakkavaram (great open or naked land),** which is believed to have contributed to the modern name of Nicobar under British rule.
 - The islands' geographic location made them an ideal staging ground for naval expeditions aimed at Southeast Asia.

- His attack on Srivijaya was a remarkable event, reflecting the Chola Empire's strength and its influence in the region.

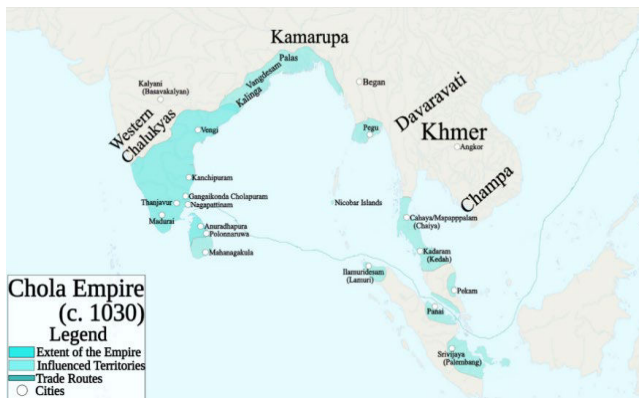
• **Invasion of Srivijaya:**

- The Chola invasion of Srivijaya was unique in India's otherwise peaceful interactions with Southeast Asia.
- For nearly a millennium, Southeast Asian states had come under the strong cultural influence of India, but this military campaign marked a rare instance of direct conflict.
- **Reasons for invasion:**
 - The **Srivijaya Empire may have attempted to disrupt Chola trade routes** with the East, which prompted Rajendra I's military response.
 - It is also believed that Rajendra I sought to extend his **digvijaya (conquest of all directions) to Southeast Asia, thereby enhancing his imperial glory.**
 - The attack on Srivijaya was also part of the **Chola's broader expansionist ambitions,** which also included conflicts with other South Indian empires and Sri Lanka.

• **Outcome:**

- Rajendra I's naval campaign against Srivijaya resulted in significant victories.
- According to inscriptional records, **he captured Srivijaya's king, Sangrama Vijayottunggavarman,** and seized valuable treasures from the Buddhist empire, including the **Vidhyadara Torana, a jewelled war gate of Srivijaya.**
- The control over the Srivijaya Empire in Southeast Asia gave access to a major commercial hub.
- The conquest gave the Cholas control over important maritime trade routes.
- This victory not only marked the height of Chola naval power but also demonstrated the empire's capacity to influence events far beyond the Indian subcontinent.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, through their association with Rajendra I's naval expeditions, gained a significant role in India's maritime strategy and historical narratives.



ABOUT RAJENDRA CHOLA I (REIGNED FROM 1014 AND 1044 CE)

Introduction:

- Rajaraja I appointed his son, Rajendra I, as his heir apparent, marking the continuation of the Chola dynasty.
- For two years, they ruled jointly, with Rajendra actively participating in campaigns, especially against the Western Chalukyas.
- These efforts extended the Chola Empire's boundaries to the Tungabhadra River, securing its northern frontier.

Conquest of the Pandyas and Sri Lanka:

- One of the major achievements during Rajaraja's reign was the attack on Madurai, forcing the Pandya rulers to flee to Sri Lanka.
- Rajendra I continued this campaign, successfully conquering Sri Lanka and reclaiming the Pandya crown and jewels.
- This victory further solidified Chola dominance over the Pandyas and Sri Lanka.

Northern expeditions:

- After ascending the throne in 1014 CE, Rajendra launched a significant campaign into northern India, extending the Chola influence beyond the Godavari River.
- His forces secured key victories, leading to the construction of the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple, commemorating the northern conquests.

Western Chalukya campaigns:

- Rajendra I continued his father's campaigns against the Western Chalukyas, successfully sacking their capital, Kalayani.

- The dwarapala statue from Kalayani, installed at the Darasuram temple, is a lasting symbol of these victories.

Rajendra I assumed titles such as **Mudikonda Cholan**, **Gangaikondan**, and **Kadaramkondan** to reflect his military triumphs and scholarly achievements. His reign marked the zenith of Chola power, extending from **South India to Southeast Asia**, cementing the Chola Empire as one of the most powerful in Indian history.

PULIKALI DANCE

#FOLKARTFORMS #DANCESININDIA #FESTIVALS

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

Artists in Thrissur, Kerala, performed Pulikali, the traditional tiger dance, marking the grand conclusion of the Onam festivities.



ABOUT THE DANCE FORM

Introduction:

- Pulikali, a vibrant recreational folk art from **Kerala**, is an integral part of the state's cultural heritage.
- This captivating performance is held annually **during the Onam festival**, which is Kerala's largest and most significant harvest celebration.
- On the **fourth day of Onam**, also known as **Naalaam Onam** or **Chathayam**, trained artists perform Pulikali to entertain the masses.
- The performance is marked by artists painted as tigers and leopards, dancing to the rhythmic beats of traditional instruments such as the **Chenda**, **Chengila**, **Udukku**, and **Thakil**.
- Usually, men and children perform this art form. For the first time, 3 women among a 51-member team participated in the Pulikali at Thrissur in 2016.

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- The theme of the dance revolves around tiger hunting, which is symbolized by the performers' costumes and movements.

Significance of Pulikali in Thrissur:

- Pulikali is predominantly performed in **Kerala's Thrissur district, where it enjoys a 200-year-old tradition.**
- This region is considered the heart of the art form, with thousands of people gathering each year to witness the spectacle.
- Although Pulikali is also performed in other regions, such as the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam, **the Thrissur Pulikali** remains the most popular and classical of all variations.

History:

- Pulikali traces its origins back to the **reign of Maharaja Rama Varma Sakthan Thampuran, the ruler of Cochin over 200 years ago.**
- The Maharaja introduced Pulikali as a form of entertainment for the local populace, where dancers would put on tiger costumes and mimic the movements of a tiger in a performance **called 'Pulikkettikali.'**
- Over time, the event gained popularity and became a central feature of Thrissur's Onam celebrations, held in memory of this historic tradition.

Performance:

- **It is also known as Kaduvakali in some regions and the dancers are called Pulikalikkar.**
- The elaborate body paint, in shades of yellow, red, and black, plays a crucial role in the performance.
- **The stripes, ranging from simple 'patta vara' to intricate 'zebra vara' designs,** are applied with great care to achieve the authentic look of a tiger.
- The tune used for Pulikkali Onam dance has a unique rhythm and is popularly known as *pulimelam*.
- The special rhythm, composed by **Thottungal Ramankutty Asan 70 years ago,** is unique to Thrissur's Pulikali.
- Each Pulikkali team comprises 50 dancers.

Rituals and preparation:

- The preparation for Pulikali is not just physical but also spiritual.
- **Performers observe a 41-day fasting period starting from the first day of the Malayalam month Karkidakam.**
- During this period, they purify their bodies and prepare mentally for the dance. The ritual of getting into costume begins the night before the event.

While Pulikali remains a significant part of Onam celebrations, it is also performed during other festive occasions in Kerala. Today, Pulikali is not only a folk art but also a major cultural spectacle that draws thousands to Thrissur, preserving its legacy for future generations.

Note:

- Rama Varma Kunji Pillai Thampuran (1751–1805), also known as **Sakthan Thampuran Sakthan means powerful**, was the ruler of the Kingdom of Cochin.
- Sakthan Thampuran was born at Vellarapally Palace to Anujan Namboodiripad of the Chennamangalam Mana and Ambika Thampuratti of the Cochin Royal Family.
- The present-day city of Kochi in southern India was once part of this princely state.
- He is credited with shaping the city of Thrissur, and it was under **his patronage that the renowned Thrissur Pooram festival was initiated.**
- **Sakthan Thampuran shifted his capital from Thrippunithura to Thrissur,** laying the foundation for the city.

A PLATFORM FOR YOUNG KOODIYATTOM ARTISTES

#HERITAGEANDCULTURE #THEATREARTININDIA

PRIMARY SOURCE THE HINDU

Cholliyattom is an informal collective of young Koodiyattom artistes in Kerala, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. This platform aims to bring together artistes from various

schools of Koodiyattom to collaborate, preserve the art form, and learn the nuances of different styles.



PRESERVING DIFFERENT KOODIYATTOM TRADITIONS

- Cholliyattom plays a critical role in preserving various styles of Koodiyattom, which include the **Kalamandalam or Painkulam style, Ammannur style, and Mani Gurukulam style.**
- By creating a space for **intergenerational knowledge transfer**, Cholliyattom ensures that these styles are kept alive and continuously practiced.
- **Nuances of Koodiyattom:**
 - Koodiyattom is known for its complexity, with intricate sign languages, acting styles, and specific techniques that vary between traditions.
 - While the costumes across different styles may appear similar, there are slight differences in gestures and performances, which can be challenging for audiences unfamiliar with the art's technical vocabulary.
- **Expanding Koodiyattom beyond temple premises:**
 - Historically, Koodiyattom performances were confined to temple premises in Kerala, limiting its audience and outreach.
 - **However, Cholliyattom aims to bring this ancient Sanskrit theatre tradition to a broader audience** by encouraging participation from artistes of diverse social backgrounds.
 - The collective not only promotes collaboration among artistes but also strives to make the art more accessible to younger generations, ensuring its continuity and evolution.

ABOUT KOODIYATTOM

Introduction:

- **Koodiyattom, a theatre tradition practiced for over two thousand years in Kerala, gained international recognition when UNESCO proclaimed it a**

'Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in 2001.

- It was later inscribed on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.**
- Koodiyattom, derived from the Malayalam word 'koodiyattam' meaning 'combined act,' is a unique **fusion of ancient Sanskrit theatre with elements of Koothu, an ancient performing art from the Sangam era.**

Note:

- **Koothu, also known as Therukoothu, is a traditional folk art from Tamil Nadu, where artists combine music, dance, and storytelling to narrate epic tales.**
- *The performances are conducted in Tamil, and this art form dates back to the early Tamil country.*
- **Koothu reached its zenith centuries ago, with mentions in Sangam literature, which also documents the development of Tamil literature (iyal), music (isai), and drama (natagam).**
- *Koothu performances usually draw from scenes in ancient epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Tamil classical epics.*
- **Notably, there is no spoken dialogue in the performances-only songs are used to convey the narrative.**

History:

- Koodiyattom, traditionally performed **in temple theatres known as koothambalams, is the only surviving art form that incorporates drama from ancient Sanskrit theatre.**
- The art form evolved from Koothu, which has been mentioned in Sangam literature and temple inscriptions of the Pallava, Pandiyan, Chera, and Chola periods.
- These performances, considered integral to worship, were conducted alongside devotional singing of hymns like Tevaram and Prabandam.
- Notably, kings of the ancient period, including a Pallava king named **Rajasimha, contributed by authoring works like Kailasodharanam** that were performed as part of these sacred services.
- **Reformation by Kulasekhara Varma:**

- **Kulasekhara Varma, a medieval king from the Chera Perumal dynasty**, is credited with reforming Koodiyattom.
- He introduced the **local language for the Vidusaka** role and restructured the presentation into well-defined units.
- He also authored two plays, **Subhadradhananjayam and Tapatisamvarana**, which are still performed today.
- Other classical plays traditionally performed in Koodiyattom include ***Kalyanasaugandhika* by Nilakantha, Nagananda by Harsha, and several plays by Bhasa, such as Abhiseka and Pratima.**

Instruments and performance traditions:

- Traditionally, the main musical instruments used in koodiyattam are the **mizhavu, kuzhitalam, edakka, kurumkuzhal, and sankhu.**
- The **mizhavu, the most prominent of these, is a percussion instrument** that is played by a person of the Ambalavas Nambiar caste, accompanied by **Nangyaramma playing the kuzhithalam (a type of cymbal).**
 - *Percussion instruments* are musical instruments that produce sound by being struck, shaken, or scraped. Examples-Drums, cymbals etc.
- Traditionally, koodiyattam has been performed by **Chakyars (a subcaste of Kerala Hindus)** and by **Nangyaramma (women of the Ambalavasi Nambiar caste).**
- The main actor is a **Chakyar who performs the ritualistic koothu and koodiyattam** inside the temple or in the **koothambalam.**
- **Chakyar women, Illotammas, are not allowed to participate.** Instead, the female roles are played by Nangyaramma.
- **Koodiyattom performances are divided into three main parts:**
 - **Purappadu:** The actor performs a verse with the **nritha** aspect of dance.
 - **Nirvahanam:** Through **abhinaya (expressive gestures)**, the actor depicts the emotions and character of the play's protagonist.
 - **Koodiyattom:** The final part, **where the actual play begins**, involving multiple actors performing in rhythm with the beats of the mizhavu drummers.

Modern revival:

- In 1962, under the guidance of art and Sanskrit scholar V. Raghavan, Guru Mani Madhava Chakyar performed **Koodiyattom outside Kerala for the first time at Sanskrit Ranga in Chennai.**
- This marked a significant moment in the evolution of the art form as it expanded beyond its traditional boundaries.

Decline:

- Historically, Koodiyattom was an exclusive art form performed within Hindu temples and restricted to caste Hindus.
- The art form, often requiring forty days to complete a performance, faced a significant decline with the **collapse of the feudal order in Kerala during the 19th century**, leading to a loss of patronage and financial difficulties for artists.
- Despite a revival in the early 20th century, Koodiyattom once again struggles due to a **lack of funding and institutional support.**

BHAGAT SINGH, A RADICAL THINKER AND IDEOLOGUE

#PERSONALITIES #MODERNHISTORY

#REVOLUTIONARIESININDIANNATIONALMOVEMENT

PRIMARY
SOURCE THE HINDU

On Bhagat Singh's birth anniversary (September 28th) it is essential to revisit his revolutionary ideas on various subject, including communalism, inequality, religion, faith, and the right to protest. His words are still very much relevant in present context, reminding us of the ongoing struggles against oppression and injustice.



INTRODUCTION

- He was a revolutionary, who was martyred in the fight against an imperialistic tyranny.
- Bhagat Singh was a **polyglot being able to communicate in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and English.**
- Having grown up in an **Arya Samaj setting** he was also familiar with the fundamentals of **Sanskrit.**
- His jail notebook is also reflective of the **diversity in his literary writings** where he draws on the works of important scholars like Karl Marx, Karl Kautsky, Thomas Paine, Mark Twain, Thomas Jefferson, etc.

EVOLUTION OF IDEALS

- In one of his earliest writings, **Vishwa Prem (Universal Love)**, published in November 1924, he declares **"Visvabandhuta (Universal Brotherhood)! For me the greatest meaning of this word is equality and nothing else."**
- **Early idealism** is reflected in his belief that, 'there would be Britishers and Indians all right but not as rulers and the ruled.'
- **Shift in Perspective:**
 - By 1928, the realities of the Indian situation had become more apparent.
 - In the article **Communal Riots and their Solution**, he stated that *the religions have left the country in communal divisions and the resulting riots have tainted the clean image of India.*
- **Critique of Journalism:**
 - He said that the media arouses the public sentiment by writing bold headlines in the newspapers against one or the other and compel people to start fighting with one another.
 - He also stated that, *'not limited to just one or two places, riots started in many locations just because of the fact that local newspapers had written articles that stoked passions.*
- **On the responsibility of newspapers:**
 - He stated that, *'the actual duty of newspapers is to educate, to liberate people from narrow-mindedness, eradicate fundamentalism, to help in creating a sense of fraternity among people, and build a common nationalism in India.'*

INTERPLAY OF SOCIETY AND POLITICS

- **Challenging the separation of students and politics:**

- His July 1928 article, **Students and Politics**, was a sharp response to those who often championed a wall of separation between student life and political activity.
- He explained that the then Punjab government requiring students to "sign off on an undertaking that they will not take part in political activities," was to pressurise the students and create fear in the minds.

- **Role of education in Political awareness:**

- He explained that the basic duty of the student is to study, but also posed a question, *'is it not part of the education that the youth should know what the conditions are in their country and be enabled to think of solutions for their improvement?'*
- He specified that an education which will **'only equip students for clerical jobs' is worthless.**
- According to him, students must acquire the knowledge of politics too, and when the **need arises they should put questions forward about the actions of those in power.**

- **Rediscovering the legacy of Untouchables in India's history:**

- In **'the Problem of Untouchability'**, he reminded the oppressed untouchables of their role in India's past.
- He also wrote that, they should unite to stand on own feet and challenge the existing oppressive order of society.
- He **rejected that the belief in Varna system** and deciding of occupation as per person's birth.

REVOLUTION: CALL FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

- **Necessity of Revolutionary Spirit:**

- In a 1929 article, **'What is Revolution?'**, he responded to the criticism of the idea of revolution that many veterans of the freedom movement had opposed.
- He wrote that 'people generally get accustomed to the established order of things and begin to tremble at the very idea of a change', which is *a lethargical spirit* that needs to be replaced by the *revolutionary spirit.*

- In the absence of Revolution, *'degeneration gains the upper hand and the whole humanity is led misled by reactionary forces'*, further leading to stagnation and paralysis in human progress and society as a whole.

- **Anarchism-ideological reflections:**

- In his work titled **'What is Anarchism?'**, published in 1928, he reflected on the ideological propositions of anarchist theory and practice.
- He explained that Anarchists are against God and religion to begin with because they feel this is the root of mental slavery. *And then they are against the state because it is the root of physical slavery.*
- Anarchists maintain that motivating people with the temptation of heaven, fear of hell or with the iron hand of law is the wrong approach and it is also an insult to a superior being like a human.
- **Bhagat Singh stated also stated that:**
 - Human being should acquire knowledge freely and work at his will and live life peacefully.
 - People presume this might mean that we would be living in the same manner as in the forests in ancient times but they are wrong.
 - In ancient times there was ignorance and people were not able to travel far and wide.
 - But now we can have knowledge and can live freely by creating relations with all.

- **Defining revolution:**

- In a **'Letter to Young Political Workers'**, he mentions that, *'according to our definition of the term, as stated in our statement in the Assembly Bomb Case, revolution means the complete overthrow of the existing social order and its replacement with the socialist order'*.
- For establishing such an order, the immediate aim is the achievement of power.
 - **The State and the government machinery is just a weapon in the hands of the ruling class** to further and safeguard its interest.
 - **The aim of a revolutionary is to snatch the power, and handle it, to utilise it for the consummation of our ideal**, i.e., social reconstruction on a new, i.e., Marxist, basis.
 - At the same time, Bhagat Singh mentioned that, along with the fight, we have to **educate the**

masses and create a favourable atmosphere for our social programme.

REASON AND ROMANTICISM IN BHAGAT SINGH'S

PHILOSOPHY

- **Religion as an obstruction to progress:**

- As an atheist and he had thought organised religion to be a hindrance to the freedom struggle in particular and to social progress in general.
- In an article published 1928, **'Religion and our Freedom Struggle'**, he reflected 'Religion' is a problem that is still present in Indian society.
- He stated that, *'a clash between people could be instigated with the loud recitation of Koranic verses and Vedic mantras.'* The question is then, *why should we not do away with all this once and for all?*

- **The Case against faith:**

- **He wrote in, 'Why I am an Atheist', that,** when man tries to stand on his own two legs and becomes a realist, he shall have to throw faith aside and face all the distress and trouble in which circumstances may land him.
- He also argued that, anyone who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item, the person has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith.
- If after considerable reasoning, one believes in any theory or philosophy, his faith is welcomed. His reasoning can be mistaken and sometimes fallacious. But he is liable to correction because reason is the guiding star of his life.
- *However, only faith and blind faith is dangerous as it inhibits critical thinking and makes a person reactionary.*

- **Nature over conscious power:**

- In explaining his *Weltanschauung* (a particular philosophy or view of life; the world view of an individual or group) he put forward his belief in the **non-existence of a conscious Supreme Being who is guiding and directing the movements of nature.**

BHAGAT SINGH'S BIRTH AND EDUCATION

- Born on **September 28, 1907**, in Lyallpur, which is now in Pakistan, Bhagat Singh's upbringing was steeped in the atmosphere of patriotic fervour.

- He received his education at the **Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School and National College in Lahore**.
- These institutions were closely associated with **Arya Samaj and the freedom movement**, exposing Bhagat Singh to the ideals of Indian independence from a young age.

Family influence on his ideals:

- Bhagat Singh's family played a pivotal role in shaping his political consciousness.
- His father and uncle, **Ajit Singh**, were actively involved in progressive politics, participating in significant events like **the Canal Colonization Bill agitation in 1907 and the Ghadar Movement of 1914-1915**.

Entry into National College and ideological shift:

- In 1923, Bhagat Singh enrolled at the **National College in Lahore, which had been established as a response to Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement**.
- Gandhi had urged Indian students to boycott educational institutions subsidized by the British government.
- Bhagat Singh's journey into the freedom movement began to take a more radical turn during this time.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT**Initial support for non-cooperation:**

- Initially, Bhagat Singh aligned himself with Mahatma Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- However, his perspective **shifted when Gandhi withdrew the movement following the Chauri Chaura incident**.
- This incident led Bhagat Singh to embrace revolutionary nationalism as a means to achieve India's independence.

Influence of tragic events:

- Tragic events such as the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 and the violence against unarmed Akali protestors at Nankana Sahib in 1921** deeply affected Bhagat Singh's worldview, fuelling his determination to free India from British rule.

Association with revolutionary groups:

- In **1924, Bhagat Singh** became a member of the **Hindustan Republican Association, founded by Sachindranath Sanyal**.
- He formed a close bond with **Chandra Shekhar Azad, the main organizer of the association**.
- Bhagat Singh's commitment to the cause led him to establish the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1926**, aiming to **mobilize peasants and workers against British rule**.

Role in "Kirti" and HSRA:

- Bhagat Singh also contributed to the monthly magazine **"Kirti" published by the 'Workers and Peasants Party'**. For a year, he served on the editorial board of "Kirti."
- In **1928, he, along with Sukhdev, Chandrashekhar Azad, and others**, founded the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.

BHAGAT SINGH'S REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES**Shift Towards armed revolution:**

- Bhagat Singh's association with HSRA introduced him to the philosophy of armed revolution.
- His commitment to the cause led to his arrest in **1927, initially for his association with the Kakori Case** and an article published under the pseudonym **Vidrohi**.

Involvement in the Saunders case:

- The tragic **death of Lala Lajpat Rai during a protest against the Simon Commission in 1928** marked a turning point.
- In an unfortunate case of mistaken identity, Bhagat Singh and his associates assassinated J.P. Saunders, leading to the **Lahore Conspiracy Case**.

Central assembly bombing:

- In **1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt** threw a bomb in the Central Assembly at Delhi, accompanied by pro-revolutionary slogans.
- Their intention was not to cause harm but to **make the 'deaf hear'**. Both were arrested without resistance, using the trial as a platform for their revolutionary message.

TRIAL AND DEATH**Hunger strike for political prisoners:**

- During their trial in 1929, Bhagat Singh and his comrades initiated a hunger strike in Lahore prison to demand better conditions for political prisoners.
- Their strike garnered widespread support from leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru.

Sentencing and execution:

- Despite widespread appeals, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru were sentenced to death.
- The execution was carried out on **March 23, 1931**, a day ahead of the scheduled date, at Lahore Jail.
- **March 23 is observed as Martyrs' Day**, paying tribute to him and fellow freedom fighters.

Bhagat Singh's eventful life was marked by extensive writing and tireless efforts. A meaningful tribute to his legacy as a revolutionary would be to widely engage with his writings.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS TO FIVE MORE LANGUAGES

#INDIANLANGUAGES #HERITAGEANDCULTURE

#HISTORY

PRIMARY
SOURCE

pib

SECONDARY
SOURCE

THE HINDU

*The Union Cabinet approved classical language status to **Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit.***

INTRODUCTION

- India has had **six classical languages till now: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Sanskrit, and Odia.**
- **Tamil was the first language** to be given classical status in **2004 followed by Sanskrit in 2005.**
- With the new additions, **11 languages in India have Classical Language status.**

CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS

- The term '**Indian classical languages,**' or **Shastriya Bhasha**, encompasses languages in India with a rich history, significant antiquity, and a distinct literary heritage.
- **In October 2004, the Centre** decided to create a new category of languages as 'Classical Languages.'
- **In November 2004, a Linguistic Experts Committee (LEC) was constituted by the Ministry of Culture under the Sahitya Akademi** to examine the eligibility

of the languages proposed to be accorded classical language status.

- **The Linguistics Expert Committee** comprises of representatives of the **Union Ministries of Home, Culture, and four or five linguistic experts** at any given time.
- It is chaired by the **President of the Sahitya Akademi.**
- The criteria for conferring the status of a 'Classical Language,' was brought which was **implemented by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Linguistic Experts' Committee.** This committee, formed by the government, **evaluates** requests for classifying languages as Classical Languages.
- **According to the Union Culture Ministry,** the criteria for bestowing classical status was **revised by the Linguistics Experts Committee**, in July, 2024.
- 9 classical languages are listed in **the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.**
 - The Eighth Schedule consists 22 languages.
 - These are: **(1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.**

TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A 'CLASSICAL LANGUAGE,' A LANGUAGE MUST SATISFY THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

Criteria (November, 2005)

- Demonstrated high antiquity of its early texts or a recorded history **spanning 1500-2000 years.**
- Possession of a body of **ancient literature or texts** considered valuable heritage by successive generations of speakers.
- Originality of the literary tradition, **not borrowed from another speech community.**
- Distinctiveness between the classical language and literature from its modern counterparts, **potentially involving a discontinuity.**

Revised Criteria (July, 2024):

- High antiquity of (its) is early texts/recorded history over **a period of 1500- 2000 years.**
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a heritage by generations of speakers

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

- **Knowledge texts, especially prose texts in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence.**
- The Classical Languages and literature could be distinct from its current form or could be discontinuous with later forms of its offshoots.

LANGUAGES GRANTED CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS

- **Tamil:** Recognized as a classical language in 2004
- **Sanskrit:** Officially recognized as a classical language on January 26, 2005
- **Telugu:** Achieved official recognition as a classical language in India in 2008
- **Kannada:** Officially recognized as a classical language in India in 2008
- **Malayalam:** Recognized as a classical language in 2013
- **Odia:** Officially recognized as a classical language on February 20, 2014
- **Marathi; Assamese; Bengali; Pali and Prakrit:** 2024

BENEFITS OF CLASSICAL STATUS

- The Ministry of Education takes steps to promote classical languages.
- Three central universities were established in **2020 through an Act of Parliament for promotion of Sanskrit language.**
- The **Central Institute of Classical Tamil** was set up to facilitate the translation of ancient Tamil texts, and offer courses in Tamil.
- To enhance the study and preservation of classical languages, the **Centres for Excellence** for studies in **Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia were also set up.**
- **Two major international awards annually** for distinguished scholars in Classical Indian Languages.
- Requesting the **University Grants Commission** to initiate, initially in Central Universities, a designated number of **Professional Chairs for Classical Languages** for eminent scholars in Classical Indian Languages.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Officially recognised Classical languages in India':

1. Tamil was the first language to be given classical status in India.
2. A classical language must have a recorded history of more than 2,000 years.
3. The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution lists all classical languages.

How many of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to the Great Stupa of Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh:

1. The stupa was first built during the period of Shunga rule in the Malwa region.
2. The Satavahanas are credited with constructing the 'Toranas' around the original stupa.
3. 'Shalabhanjika sculpture' is used as a decorative element in the Eastern gateway of the stupa.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to the history of India:

HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

1. In 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose proclaimed the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the first territory of India to be liberated from British rule.
2. In 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose hoisted the Indian National Flag for the first time upon his return to Calcutta.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Pulikali art form':

1. It is an all women dance-drama performance associated with Onam celebrations.
2. The performance is accompanied by the musical instruments 'Thakil' and 'Chenda'.
3. The art form originated under the patronage of Marthanda Varma, the ruler of the Travancore kingdom.

Which of the statements given above are not correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q5. With reference to the Indian folk theatre, consider the following pairs:

S. No.	Folk Theatre	Associated State
1.	Theyyam	: Kerala
2.	Koodiyattom	: Tamil Nadu
3.	Burra Katha	: Karnataka
4.	Bayalata	: Andhra Pradesh

How many of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

Q6. With reference to the India National Movement, consider the following statements:

1. Bhagat Singh was against the launch of Non-cooperation movement in 1921.
2. Bhagat Singh in association with Sachindranath Sanyal founded the Hindustan Republican Association.
3. Bhagat Singh founded 'Kirti' as the Publication of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

- Q1.** Bhagat Singh's idea of 'Revolution' was not only about rising against the oppressors but the idea also included educating and creating awareness among the masses about the social change. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)
- Q2.** Discuss the contributions of Sawai Jai Singh II to various aspects of scientific and cultural advancements during the medieval period in India. (150 words; 10 marks)

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-a, 4-c, 5-a, 6-d

PART TWO

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Coverage from varied sources

INTEGRAL HUMANISM

#ETHICS INTEGRITY AND APTITUDE

25th September marked 108th birth anniversary of Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay. In this context, let us understand the **philosophy of Integral humanism** given by him.

INTEGRAL HUMANISM

Background:

- The doctrine of Integral Humanism was born from Upadhyaya's desire to have **"uniquely Indian"** ideas to guide the journey of the newly independent nation, as opposed to the many Western 'isms' like individualism, communism and socialism which developed in the West.
- He explained that Bharatiya (Indian) thought views life as a unified whole, with the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions closely intertwined. In contrast, the Western approach often isolates and compartmentalizes aspects of life.

INTEGRAL HUMANISM

Integral Humanism focuses on the **holistic development of society and the individual**, encompassing both **material and spiritual well-being**. It integrates the traditional Indian concepts of *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires), and *moksha* (spiritual liberation).

KEY FEATURES

- **Indigenous socio-economic model:** 'Integral Humanism' presents '**Indigenous socio-economic model**' in which **human beings remain at the center of development**.
- **Holistic Development:** Upadhyay rejected both Western individualism and Marxist socialism. He believed that neither the individual nor society should be prioritized at the expense of the other. Instead, **development must be based on a synthesis of both**, taking care of individual welfare and the collective good.
- **Four Purusharthas:** He emphasized the traditional Indian concept of *Purusharthas*- *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *Moksha* (liberation)—as the guiding framework for a fulfilled human life.
- **Harmony of material and spiritual:** Integral Humanism advocates for a balance between material

progress and spiritual fulfillment. Upadhyay critiqued Western industrialization, which often led to materialism and consumerism, and called for development that respects India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

- **Dignity of every human being:** The aim of Integral Humanism is to **ensure dignified life for every human being** while balancing the needs of individual and society.
- **Decentralization and Self-reliance:** The philosophy advocates for decentralization of political and economic power, promoting self-sufficient village communities and local governance. Upadhyay's vision resembles the Gandhian concept of ***Gram Swaraj* (village autonomy)**.
- **Sustainability:** It supports **sustainable consumption of natural resources** which can be replenished.
- **Cultural Nationalism:** Integral Humanism rejects the imposition of foreign ideologies and emphasizes the importance of India's indigenous culture and values. Upadhyay believed that India's national identity is deeply rooted in its cultural and spiritual ethos.
- To sum up, the philosophy of integral humanism is based on the following three principles.
 - Primary of whole, no part
 - Supremacy of **Dharma**
 - Autonomy of society

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF INTEGRAL HUMANISM

- **Balance between Economic Growth and Social Welfare:** Amidst the current debates about development models, Upadhyay's vision of integrating material progress with spiritual and ethical values is important. With increasing inequality, environmental concerns, and social strife, the idea of development that serves not just economic interests, but also social and ethical well-being is particularly pertinent.
- **Decentralization and Local Governance:** Integral Humanism's emphasis for decentralized governance and self-reliant villages is echoed in modern policy

efforts like the **Gram Panchayat System, Smart Cities Mission**, and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (self-reliant India).

- **Sustainable and Ethical Development:** The environmental crisis, climate change, and sustainable development goals (SDGs) highlight the necessity of balancing economic growth with ecological sustainability. Integral Humanism's focus on harmony between nature, society, and the individual is relevant to current global discussions on environmental ethics.
- **Social harmony and diversity:** Integral Humanism's rejection of extreme individualism and class conflicts offers a vision of unity amidst diversity of India. India's multicultural, multi-religious fabric requires a framework that promotes **social cohesion**.
- **Rethinking Western models of development:** Upadhyay critiqued Western materialistic models of development, and suggested an indigenous model suited to India's socio-economic realities. In today's **post-colonial world**, the global south is increasingly questioning the suitability of Western economic models and looking for homegrown solutions.

Government initiatives reflecting the vision of Deen Dayal Upadhyay: Several current government policies and initiatives in India reflect the philosophy of **Integral Humanism**, as propounded by Deen Dayal Upadhyay:

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India):** The *Atma Nirbhar Bharat* initiative embodies the principle of self-reliance, which was a core component of Integral Humanism. It focuses on building local industries, reducing dependency on foreign imports, and promoting indigenous products. This aligns with Upadhyay's idea of **self-sufficient villages** and decentralized economic power.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** This scheme emphasizes on **integrated human**

development by promoting financial inclusion. Upadhyay believed that development should address not only the wealthy but also the poorest sections of society.

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana:** This scheme is an embodiment of his concept of **Antyodaya**—uplifting the last person in the society. It aims to eradicate poverty and improve the livelihood of the poor through skill development and economic support.
- **Ayushman Bharat (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana): Reflection of Integral Humanism:** Ayushman Bharat's focus on **healthcare for all** reflects the holistic approach of Integral Humanism, which stresses both the material and spiritual well-being of individuals. The scheme ensures access to healthcare for the economically vulnerable, recognizing health as a fundamental component of human dignity.
- **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas:** The guiding principle of the current government reflects Upadhyay's vision of **inclusive development**, where every individual and community, regardless of caste, religion, or region, contributes to and benefits from national progress. The focus is on **social cohesion** and development for all.
 - Through various social welfare schemes, the government aims to promote equality and reduce disparities. Policies like **Ujjwala Yojana** (providing LPG connections to poor households), **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** (affordable housing), and **Skill India Mission** all work toward this goal.

Thus, Upadhyay's vision of a holistic, decentralized, culturally rooted, and self-reliant society resonates in various aspects of governance and development today.

CASE STUDIES FOR PRACTICE

MAINS GS PAPER IV

Case Study 1: The upland areas in a state remained on edge with concerns over the satellite survey for demarcation of buffer zones around protected areas running high, despite the government's efforts to allay fears about the dispossession of property and regulation of activities. Citizens turned out in large numbers in Idukki and Kottayam to submit complaints about the draft buffer zone map published by the government because their livelihood and culture would be negatively affected due to reduction in the buffer zone area. Because the forest is the sole source of livelihood for the local tribe. They also have an emotional attachment to the forest and its biological diversity. The tribe is also known as the protector of the forest and its biodiversity.

Some credible sources revealed that this sudden reduction in the buffer zone is a result of collusion between the state and the business class. Because this forest is very rich in red Sandalwood which is in high demand in the domestic as well as global market. Moreover, there is a large amount of rare earth metal which is in high demand for the rising electric-vehicle industry.

A tense situation prevailed at Angel Valley of the state, near Erumely (a place in the state), after a protest against buffer zone demarcation turned unruly, resulting in damage to public property. Forest officials filed a complaint about vandalism and threats by protesters.

Some legal experts highlighted that the controversial draft is a clear violation of rules regarding eco-sensitive zones. If this draft comes into force, then there is a high probability of not only environmental degradation but also hurting the goal of inclusive development.

Erumely panchayat decided to explore the possibility of impleading itself in the case on the buffer zone issue under the consideration of the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Opposition political parties continued to turn the heat on the government on the issue.

Senior leader Suresh Chennithala of the opposition political party said the draft buffer zone map published by the government was riddled with errors and inaccuracies. "Supreme Court had issued directives to furnish a report after carrying out a new survey. Yet, the government has now published the report prepared in 2021 after dillydallying for seven months," he said.

Mr Chennithala said the government was bound to suffer a serious setback if it submitted the map in its present form before the top court. He accused the government of fumbling in the dark without carrying out the ground survey.

Considering this whole controversy, the state government has constituted an expert committee to investigate the matter. You are appointed as head of that team. You are an environmental expert in the same state. Your job application is pending before the government of the day. Your wife is a cancer patient in the last stage. You are in urgent need of this highly remunerative job.

- (a) What are the options available to you under the given situation?
- (b) Critically examine the options listed by you.
- (c) What type of mechanism would you suggest ensuring environmental compliance?
- (d) What are the ethical dilemmas you faced in exercising your option? (Answer in 250 words) 20

SOLUTION

Introduction:

This case deals with various issues like collusive corruption, environmental degradation, violation of law etc.

- (a) Options available with the head of the committee.
 - I. Investigating the case from all aspects with full expertise and integrity.
 - II. Overlooking the concerns of the protesters.
 - III. Finding the middle path to achieve development with environmental protection.

- (b) Evaluation of the options

Option	Merit	Demerit
I	Ensure justice to duty.	In case of accusations comes true then development is compromised.
II	He may get a lucrative job.	Possibility of environmental degradation. Loss of livelihood of locals and long-term damage.
III	May ensure development and environmental protection in the short run	May hamper biodiversity and sustainable development in the long run.

(c) **Mechanisms to ensure environmental compliance**

- Participation of all major stakeholders in buffer zone-related issues
- Mandating environmental audits in such eco-sensitive zones for clearance of any developmental project.
- Institutionalising the review process of such developmental projects in protected areas.

(d) **Ethical dilemmas involved in the case are:**

Environment Vs Development: What to prefer environment or economic development?

Personal interest Vs public interest: Whether to get a lucrative job to save his wife by ignoring the concerns of locals, but doing so may pose a threat to the livelihood of locals and degradation of the environment.

Law Vs ethics: Prima facie, the government is authorised to change the boundaries of protected areas hence he may find nothing wrong in this controversial draft but the same draft is against the values of humanity and the environment.

Conclusion: Thus, it can be concluded that economic development and environmental protection should not be considered in binary rather they should be treated as complementary and supplementary in nature to ensure sustainable and inclusive development.

Case Study 2: All students of the State-run M.R. Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts, a film school at Thekkumthala, Kottayam, have been on an indefinite strike since last month. The students have been demanding the ouster of Ankur Mohan, director of the school, for allegedly discriminating against the students and staff based on caste. The State Higher Education Minister, R. Sindhu, has now instituted a high-level inquiry on the issue and you are the head of that committee. You are a joint secretary whose file for promotion to cabinet secretary is under process in the office of the same minister who is a relative of Mr Mohan. The team has been instructed to submit their findings in two weeks.

The institute has witnessed several waves of protests since its opening in 2016. In the latest bout of protest, led by the students' council of the school, they have raised a set of charges against Mr Mohan that varied from caste discrimination to forcing sanitation workers to do domestic labour at his official residence, including cleaning of toilets.

According to the students, Mr Mohan took the lead in shortening three-year courses offered by the institute into two-year programmes without due consultation and research. The sanitation workers, employed by the institute on a daily wage basis, have testified their experience of receiving inhumane treatment at the hands of Mr Mohan. Another Dalit employee of the institute has approached the SC/ST commission with a complaint of caste discrimination against Mr Mohan.

Documents that emerged in the public domain showed that as many as 26 out of the 30 seats reserved for different categories of students have not been filled while admitting students to the 2022 batch. It showed that several candidates were denied admission with the abrupt introduction of cut-off marks by the institute's academic committee.

The protest, which had been largely limited to the institute's campus in the first few days, struck a chord with filmmakers, film students as well as cinephiles during the 27th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in Thiruvananthapuram. An array of faces from contemporary local cinema, including filmmakers

Aashiqui Abu, Mahesh Narayanan, Joe Baby, Kamal, K.M. Kamal, Vidhu Vincent, actor Sajith Madathil and musician Shahbaz Aman joined the students at a protest staged at the main venue of the event.

Mr Mohan has stayed largely aloof from the public eye. But talking to The Hindu, he denied all the charges and maintained that "the truth has a way of revealing itself". Eminent filmmaker A.K. Gopalakrishnan, chairman of the institute, has been firm in his support for Mr Mohan and described him as a 'well-bred man'.

The statement, however, drew sharp reactions and the protesters issued an open letter challenging Mr Gopalakrishnan's stance. The institution, meanwhile, is also accused of indulging in retaliatory action by cancelling the room reservations for 52 students who arrived in Thiruvananthapuram to attend the IFFK.

Though the students attempted to contact the director and other officials, their calls went unattended. The State Chalachitra Academy later arranged temporary accommodation for the students. The State government has taken serious note of the issue as is evident from its decision to institute a high-level inquiry into the issue. It, at the same time, does not want to antagonise A.K. Gopalakrishnan, a filmmaker of towering stature, and is treading a cautious path before taking any final decision.

- (a) Under the given conditions, what are the options available to you as a head of the inquiry committee?
- (b) Critically evaluate each of the options listed by you.
- (c) What option would you adopt and why?
- (d) What can be the consequences of overlooking the questions raised by the protesting students?

SOLUTION

Introduction:

The above-given case deals with multiple issues like caste-based discrimination, misuse of authority, irresponsible behaviour, lack of transparency etc.

(a) Options available are:

- I. Investigating all accusations of students against Mr Mohan with full zeal and honesty.

II. Saving the director by misleading investigation.

III. Recusing from the case.

(b) Evaluation of options

Option	Merit	Demerit
I	Justice to duty. Establish universal action.	May lose a promotion.
II	Denial of duty.	May get promotion
III	Preventing the probability of conflict of interest	Escaping from the duty

(c) As head of investigating team, one should follow option number 1st because by doing so

- He will uphold foundational values of civil servants that is integrity, objectivity and honesty etc.
- He may ensure greatest good to the greatest number that is the students.
- He may establish universal action and can create a role model for others in future.
- He will promote virtue ethics in society at large.

(d) Probable consequences of ignoring the demands of the students:

- Caste-based discrimination may be increased in the institutions.
- Exploitation of workers may continue.
- Promote crony capitalism because the duration of course has been reduced without reducing fees.
- Violation of law of land because reserved seats are not being filled.
- Damage reputation of the institution, which in turn may harm the institution in the long run.
- Peaceful protests may turn into a violent one.

Conclusion: Thus, based on above discussion we can conclude that to ensure quality education and justice to society at large such accusations should be dealt with on a priority basis efficiently and transparently.

PART THREE

ESSAYS OF THE MONTH

Selected essays from Rau's GSI students

EDUCATION IS NOT FILLING OF A PAIL BUT THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: VAIBHAV PATIL

Disclaimer: The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer above. The role of Rau's IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

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In the early 1960s, farmers in the USA were using excessive pesticides, driven by a fertilizers lobby that prioritized economic gain. This situation raised concerns for Rachel Carson, an American biologist, who, through her essay "Silent Spring," illuminated the damage caused by pesticides. She effectively alerted the public to the harsh realities of pesticide use.

Both the fertilizer companies and Carson were educated (technically competent) individuals. However, their uses of this competence diverged significantly. The companies focused on narrow self-gains, akin to filling a pail, while Carson aimed to ignite awareness and inspire change regarding environmental issues, much like lighting a fire in the minds of the masses.

This text aims to explore the true purpose of education: Is it merely about filling a pail, or does it aspire to a broader understanding, akin to lighting a fire?

What is Education?

In its true sense, education is about letting the mind work and think critically. With education comes rationality in thought, speech, and action, which are widely accepted principles. As highlighted by Plato, the use of reason makes concepts universally acceptable.

Education serves as a lens through which we can differentiate between good and bad, right and wrong. It embodies within us the standards and principles that guide human behaviour (ethics). Thus, education can be equated with ethics.

Moreover, education strengthens the innate human drive to pursue happiness. According to Epicureanism, pleasure is the highest good; therefore, education facilitates the enjoyment of that good, making it of utmost importance.

Thus, education is not merely about knowing facts or information; it involves analysing and understanding the world, which makes us truly humane. Despite the noble purpose of education, it is often overshadowed by the pursuit of superiority, leading to a narrow focus on self-gain and hedonism.

It is imperative to examine whether education is meant to fill a pail or if it represents a broader perspective, like the ocean of knowledge. It would be unjust to view an ocean merely as a vessel to fill a pail for several reasons:

Technical competence without integrity can lead to a distorted interpretation of education. While technical skills may facilitate self-growth, growth without a humane touch—lacking integrity—results in hollow achievements. This disregard for ethical considerations can produce corrupt individuals, exemplified by various officials who are technically competent yet lack integrity.

Moreover, a narrow interpretation of education can lead to a self-serving quest for power, ignoring fundamental human nature. The development of biological weapons and the nuclear arms race are products of such a perverse interpretation.

Financially, individuals like Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya exploited loopholes in the law and financial system. They were educated and capable of identifying these gaps, but they used their knowledge for self-gain, illustrating the dangers of viewing education as merely filling a pail.

Conversely, when we view education as a means of imparting meaning to life, we can enjoy the fruits of pleasure. The Renaissance—both scientific and social—ignited a fire in the dark corners of humanity. The invention of the steam engine and the abolition of

practices like sati are testaments to education's broader purpose.

Social upliftment is the true outcome of education. The civil rights movement, championed by figures like Rosa Parks, is an example of how education, particularly moral education, can inspire change and promote equality.

Technical competence paired with integrity embodies the true meaning of education. Companies like Amazon, while successful, demonstrate a moral commitment through initiatives like Amazon Saheli, which support young entrepreneurs with social impact. Such efforts reflect the values that true education promotes.

The notion of igniting minds cannot be overlooked in discussions about the purpose of education. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's works emphasize the ripple effect of education in fostering positive change.

In essence, education is a broader concept that can be equated with revolution, evolution, and the multifaceted benefits of making humans more socially aware. While viewing education as filling a pail may be antithetical to its true meaning, there are instances where it can provide direction. For example, a student who aspires to be a doctor may initially focus on subjects they find uninteresting, such as mathematics, only to discover a newfound passion that guides them in a different direction.

Despite the shortcomings of viewing education as merely filling a pail, it is crucial to recognize its potential to ignite

a fire within individuals at all levels. To unleash the true meaning of education, we must pursue several strategies:

- 1. At the Family Level:** Parents should not judge their children solely on their marks. Instead, they should guide them on how education can impact their lives, instilling values of brotherhood and discussing fundamental scientific principles that promote positive connotations.
- 2. At the School and Community Level:** Emphasis should be placed on activity-based learning, which can have an innovative impact on students. This approach will help develop values and create well-rounded individuals.
- 3. At the National Level:** Governments should implement reformative policies, such as the National Education Policy (NEP) and initiatives like Stand-Up India, which supports entrepreneurs from scheduled castes and tribes. Skill development programs can also tap into the potential of education to enlighten youth and vulnerable populations.

When these efforts are coordinated across various levels, we can envision a society flourishing with peace and harmony. Education follows Newton's third law of motion: every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Thus, we should aim to make our actions kind so that the reactions they provoke are also kind.

In conclusion, education is not merely about filling a pail; it is about lighting a fire.

THE REAL TEST OF POWER IS NOT THE CAPACITY TO MAKE WAR, BUT THE CAPACITY TO PREVENT IT.

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: YASHASWI SINGH

Disclaimer: The viewpoints in the topic are strictly personal of the writer above. The role of Rau's IAS Study Circle is to present the write-up in its original form, hence the study circle neither endorses nor rejects any viewpoint in the submission. The purpose is only to showcase the manner of writing.

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"Blood called to blood; river called to its source. To hold their hearts steady, for it was no bad dream: Tales had failed, and

leaders had returned. And guns would now solve what conversation could not."

This unfortunate scenario reflects the harsh reality of our world. Talks and dialogues give way to wars, which lead to bloodshed, grief, and further violence. All of this typically occurs for one primary reason—power. The pursuit of strength and supremacy is such that even the most mature individuals succumb to it. In demonstrating their strength, people resort to war. However, wars do not determine who is right; they merely show who is left.

Wars have historically been one of the oldest methods of demonstrating power. They are a brutal way to assert dominance. However, time and again, it has been proven that true strength lies in preventing wars and strengthening friendships and alliances. In this essay, we will explore themes that exist as better, faster, and more effective methods of demonstrating power than the brutal methods of warfare. Violence should be a last resort, if used at all.

Understanding Power and War

The concept of power is not new. Even in tribal societies, there existed a leader perceived as stronger than others, guiding the tribe. The essential requirement for leadership seems to be strength or brute force.

However, we have evolved significantly from our tribal origins. In the present day, power resides with governments and semi-governmental agencies. In this context, Robert Dahl defined power as the ability to act in a course of action despite opposition. In his conception, power is always coercive. However, later thinkers like Mary Parker Follett and Elton Mayo defined power as a participative concept—"power with" rather than "power over."

If we consider 'war,' it denotes organized violence between multiple parties, representing a direct confrontation over competing claims. Conversely, preventing war means having the ability to effect change and maintain the status quo without using force. It embodies the capacity to resolve disputes peacefully and ethically.

With these definitions in mind, let us analyse the relationship between war and power.

Power, War, and the Display of Strength

Going to war, winning battles, and capturing territory has historically been one of the primary ways nations demonstrate power. A notable example is the Ottoman Turks, who captured Spain, gaining access to crucial trade routes and asserting their dominance in the region.

Wars signal power effectively; violence conveys a clear message: "Submit or be subdued." The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict exemplifies this, as both nations attempt to compel the other to adhere to their respective viewpoints.

However, not all wars are fought solely for direct objectives; some arise from anger and frustration. The U.S.-Afghanistan War, which lasted nearly 20 years, is a prime example. Following the attacks on the Twin Towers, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan as a reactionary display of anger.

Sometimes, wars may be necessary—not to show offensive power but to protect interests. India's resistance against China in 1962 and against Pakistan in 1971 serves as a demonstration of defensive capabilities rather than aggressive intent.

Furthermore, individuals sometimes need to wage wars against their own desires and urges. Such internal battles reflect true power, as emphasized by figures like Gautama Buddha and Mahavira, who advocated that spiritual strength surpasses physical power.

In some contexts, it may be necessary to wage wars against social and economic injustices when circumstances deteriorate. This illustrates our collective strength to stand up for what we believe in.

Thus, wars possess both positive and negative connotations. Yet, why is the prevention of wars deemed the true test of strength for individuals, societies, or nations? Let us analyse this in detail.

Wars: Prevention as True Power

Wars are wasteful and crude means of achieving objectives and should be avoided. True strength lies in maturity and wisdom; therefore, preventing wars is more valuable than waging them.

A nation or individual that resorts to war indicates that all other methods have failed, revealing a lack of comprehensive national power. The U.S.-Iraq War

exemplifies this: the U.S. resorted to military action due to its inability to remove then-President Saddam Hussein through diplomatic means, reflecting poorly on its overall development.

Additionally, wars often yield short-term rather than long-term solutions. Mature and powerful nations effect change through diplomacy, trade, and engagement.

Regarding moral wars, if a person must engage in internal conflict, it signifies a poor state of affairs. It suggests that desires have taken such control that warfare becomes necessary rather than fostering gradual change. Such conditions reflect negatively on the individual.

Conversely, when confronting issues like hunger, a proactive approach—focusing on alleviating inequality and enhancing capabilities—proves far more effective than waging war.

Thus, a proactive approach that utilizes comprehensive strategies can achieve state and individual goals more effectively than war alone. Does this mean that no war can ever be waged? We will analyse this further in the next section.

Power through Establishing Peace: War as a Last Resort

The ultimate aim of any society or nation should be to pursue peace and justice. Both utilitarian and deontological thinkers agree that peace should be a common objective.

The ability to prevent war should be the true metric of strength for a nation or society. War signifies weakness in all aspects except military might and reflects poorly on a state's ability to achieve its objectives. The example of Indian forces in Sri Lanka illustrates this point. Unable to establish peace or quell insurgents, Indian forces ultimately withdrew.

However, in certain contexts, waging war may become necessary. Defensive wars fall into this category, as exemplified by the Indian War in Kargil, where the state demonstrated its power through military engagement.

Another context requiring war is when there is an urgent need to protect principles. The Second World War against Nazi invasion in Europe is often cited as an example.

Additionally, when pressing issues arise, such as the lack of sanitation and cleanliness in India, urgent attention is needed. The Swachh Bharat Mission launched by the government represents a war against uncleanness. Similarly, addressing hunger and malnutrition has prompted the government to initiate programs like the POSHAN Mission and the National Food Security Act, along with initiatives like Mid-Day Meals.

In conclusion, we have seen that while wars are poor tools for demonstrating power, they may sometimes be necessary. What relevance does this discussion hold in today's context? Let us analyse that next.

Present Context

In today's world, we face global challenges related to peace, security, climate, and health. Ongoing conflicts, such as those between Russia and Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas, underscore the desperate need for effective, accountable, and transparent global institutions. These institutions were initially established to prevent crises. Therefore, the way forward must emphasize collective strength, recognizing that no one is as powerful as all of us together. The ability to prevent wars will ultimately determine how powerful these institutions are.

In conclusion, power was once closely linked to the capacity for violence. Wars reflect a "might is right" mentality. However, the modern world increasingly values the prevention of war over conflict. The true measure of power today lies in the ability to prevent war rather than provoke it. Nonetheless, in certain circumstances, war may serve a utilitarian purpose and be deemed necessary.

As for the poem at the beginning, it has a hopeful ending:

Friends and Foes Alike

Intervened in the matter, calming the tempers driven before bullets began to patter. What could have taken lives was finally resolved without a clatter.

THE GREATEST GLORY LIES NOT IN NEVER FALLING, BUT RISING EVERY TIME WE FALL

#PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBMITTED BY: PRATEEK YADAV

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The focus was on the bull's eye. The finger was on the trigger. Time was running out. And click-click! The electronic circuit of the pistol malfunctioned. No bullets could be fired, and Manu Bhaker, the most prized shooter of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic contingent from India, was out of the race.

Three years later, a rejuvenated and better-equipped Manu rose to the occasion at the Paris Olympics 2024. She made history by becoming the first Indian woman to win two medals in a single Olympics. It was her grit and resilience that allowed her to rise from the ashes and reclaim her glory.

This anecdote clearly demonstrates the significance of rising every time we fall. Had Manu given up in fear of failure, India would never have regained its most prized shooter.

However, is it as easy as it seems to fight back? What is the need to show resilience? Is never falling a better option? What does it take to achieve the spirit of rising back every time? The questions are many, but so are the answers. Let us delve deeper.

Life and Glory: The Hermeneutics

The purpose of life has been a quintessential question troubling philosophers since the dawn of civilization. Life is often considered a journey of ups and downs—a roller coaster ride from the day we are born until we die.

Consequently, the purpose of life is to enjoy this journey. Once we start embracing the rises and falls of life, we absorb the essence of existence. This leads to what can be called "glory in living."

Glory, as a concept, has Roman origins, associated with the victors among gladiators. However, glory encompasses broader connotations. It is an amalgamation of determination, success, pride, and grit.

Glory in Living: The Debates

Society often looks up to those who are successful. In other words, glory is frequently tied to the outcome—success. This may falsely imply that one should take inspiration solely from the end result.

However, this fallacy becomes apparent when we examine the process leading to success. That process is filled with failures. The difference between those who succeed and those who fail lies in how they respond to these failures.

"Process is more important than the result." – MS Dhoni

For example, the Indian cricket team took their defeat in the 2023 ICC World Cup as a springboard—an opportunity to analyse their mistakes and return stronger for the 2024 T20 ICC World Cup. Their victory in the 2024 Cup was the result of a process rich in failures but marked by the resilience to rise after each setback.

This is what glory truly represents! The ability to rise from failures symbolizes the essence of life. Life is all about progressing toward something better, and this progression is only possible when we make mistakes and learn from them. This is what Chetan Bhagat refers to as the "Art of Redemption."

Life provides everyone an opportunity to attain glory by presenting us with hardships. But those who remain

unfazed in such storms achieve redemption and true glory.

Never Falling: An Art or a Trap?

There are two approaches to "never falling." One is the easy route: to avoid risks and follow a well-trodden path.

"The only man who never fails is the one who does nothing." – Theodore Roosevelt

This, however, is a lazy approach that leaves no room for experimenting with new possibilities and expanding the frontiers of human progress.

Take North Korea, for instance. Its obsession with "never falling" has prevented it from opening its doors to the world. This protectionist approach has been detrimental to the progress of North Korean society.

In contrast, South Korea has embraced risks as opportunities and demonstrated the grit to rise from a Japanese colony to an "Asian Tiger."

This brings us to the second approach to "never falling." Here, the goal is to avoid falling, but the means are characterized by wrong decisions viewed constructively—as opportunities to move closer to the ideal of "permanent success." This was beautifully articulated by APJ Abdul Kalam:

"What involves right decisions? Experience. How does one gain experience? Through failures. What are the reasons for failures? Wrong decisions!"

Ingredients to Glory: Strive, Not Just Rise

Making wrong decisions is acceptable. Rising from failures is better. But what is best? The best approach is not just to show resilience but to also possess the determination and grit to reclaim lost ground.

For instance, Chandrayaan-2 was a partial failure for ISRO. While it required resilience to continue with routine PSLV launches, true glory was achieved only with the successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3. The ingredient to this glory was the spirit to turn the tide around, not merely to return to business as usual.

Only such an approach pushes human endeavours toward excellence and leads to the blossoming of life within individuals.

Throwing Down the Gauntlet: Take Up the Challenge!

Achieving the spirit of fighting back is easier said than done. Challenging challenges themselves is a tough task. We need a tough mind, strong willpower, and emotional resilience.

This requires several ingredients, the first being emotional intelligence.

"If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same, yours is the Earth and everything that's in it." – Rudyard Kipling

Having an inner drive toward a goal and developing "Stith Prajna" requires mindfulness techniques like meditation and reflection. Strong willpower requires a "never-give-up" attitude. A tough mind is developed through the practice of facing adversity with a smile and remembering the true essence of life—a journey filled with ups and downs.

These were the ingredients that Manu Bhaker employed to achieve the "greatest glory in living"—rising every time she fell.

Let us draw the curtains with the words of Jim Watkins:

"A river cuts through the rocks not because of its force but because of its persistence."